

# PRECISELY THERE



A Festschrift for  
Ronald H. Bayes



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Ronald H. Bayes

**Festschrift** /'fes(t)-,shrift/ *noun* [German, from *Fest* celebration + *Schrift* writing] (1898): a volume of writings by different authors presented as a tribute or memorial especially to a scholar; in academia, high praise in the form of a book written for and presented to a respected teacher during his or her lifetime. It recognizes and honors that person's remarkable influence on those who provided the material for the book and on many others who share the same love and respect.

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*Fidelity*

The man standing by his word

Confucius, *The Great Digest*  
Translated by Ezra Pound

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Compiled and Edited by  
Todd Davis, John Lawson,  
and Craig Smith

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Palisade Press  
A line of bold cliffs, a shelf of bold books.

My love, who ever you were,  
not stir.

Be sure  
we are in air

Precisely there.

\* \* \*

Everything is vital.

Ron Bay

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## FOREWORD

THIS WONDERFUL COLLECTION of inspired work is a tribute to Writer-in-Residence and Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing Emeritus Ronald Homer Bayes, who for more than 40 years has taught creative writing at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina. The idea for this *Festschrift* stirred for many years in the minds of three of his students—Todd Davis, John Lawson, and Craig Smith—all classmates and writers who graduated from St. Andrews in 1971.

With Ron's recent "retirement" to teaching only one course a semester at St. Andrews, those stirrings gave rise to action, and this book filled quickly with poetry, prose, photographs, art, musings, and memories. The contributions came in from across the country and literally around the world from some 50 contributors—published writers and weekend poets; Pound and Eliot scholars to Black Mountain College followers; those living in such far-flung, disparate places as Canada, Italy, Japan, Umapine, Oregon and Gibson, NC; and those who can tell tales about Ron dating back to the 1960s to those who fell under his spell in the years since the turn of the new century.

While this volume honors Ron Bayes as a mentor, teacher, poet, publisher, playwright, critic, scholar, internationalist, and colleague, its real tribute is to the power of friendship that runs deep and wide in Ron's heart and soul.

Some years ago, I was fortunate to be present at a large dinner party during which three of Ron's fondest contemporaries—Nancy Bradberry, Grace Evelyn Gibson, and Marie Gilbert—surprised him by announcing a future plan to endow a professorship at St. Andrews in his name and honor. Indeed, Ron was clearly surprised and caught a bit off guard by the announcement and the many laudatory words beautifully expressed about him. When the time came for Ron

to respond he stood slowly, paused, and looked directly at the crowd. Without hesitation and with the utmost humility, he quoted perfectly from memory two lines from William Butler Yeats' *The Municipal Gallery Re-Visited*:

Think where man's glory most begins and ends,  
And say my glory was I had such friends.

In that simple couplet, we see the man and that which he values most. This *Festschrift* then honors our friend, Ronald Homer Bayes, whose life, work, and friendship will be remembered for as long as there is the written word.

*Paul Baldasare*, President  
St. Andrews Presbyterian College  
April 16, 2011

## PREFACE

"SOAK IN SOME of the old man's *geist*," the poet Gene Fowler wrote us back in 1975. The "old man" was Ezra Pound, and if there was any place where one might conceivably soak in his spirit it was Brunnenburg, the northern Italian castle home of his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz.

My wife, Lynda, and I had left San Francisco for a year at the castle, courtesy of an introduction from Ron Bayes, our friend and my former professor at St. Andrews. Soon enough, and with Ron's further instigation, we would help found the St. Andrews semester at Brunnenburg, a live tradition that continues to this day.

Throughout our long friendship, Ron—one of the most quotable people imaginable, whether on paper or in person—imparted many memorable lines, phrases, and inspirations, but none more so than the one by which we have approached all things since: "Slow and steady wins the race—but attack, always attack!" That sums up just about everything Ron has stood for throughout his career: persistence and provocation, consistency and courage, endurance and enlightenment.

"A poet's work is to wake people up," Fowler wrote us in that same letter, "without, however, making much issue of their being asleep." This *Festschrift* is a celebration of Ron Bayes's spectacular success at that task. Through his own work and through everything he has done for so many others over so many years, Ron has shown himself to be a consummate champion of *art* and *action*, two terms that, for him, are inseparable. And while no single volume can adequately represent the depth of love for and gratitude to Ron that his colleagues, friends, peers, and students feel for his decades of fighting the good fight, this book is a sincere beginning.

Sir, we salute you!

*Craig Smith*

## RONALD H. BAYES: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

RONALD H. BAYES is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Literature and Creative Writing and Writer-in-Residence at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Laurinburg, N.C., and founding editor of St. Andrews Press and *St. Andrews Review*.

Born in Oregon in 1932, he lived in the town of Umapine during his public school years. He earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from Eastern Oregon College, and studied at Colorado State College, the University of Pennsylvania as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow in American Literature, the University of British Columbia, and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. From 1956 to 1958, he was stationed in Iceland as a member of a U.S. infantry combat team, and has lived in Japan. He taught at his alma mater and at the University of Maryland extension in Japan before joining the St. Andrews faculty in 1968.

Bayes served as Master Poet-in-Residence at The Atlantic Center for the Arts in 1986, was one of three American poets invited to read at The Noto Festival in Tokyo in the summer of 1987, and that same year received a N.C. Arts Council Fellowship for creative writing. He has recorded his poetry for the Widener Library at Harvard University. In 1989 he received the North Carolina Award for Literature (the state's highest civilian award), and in 2002 The North Carolina Writers' Network established its Lifetime Achievement Award for Literature, naming it after him and presenting him with the inaugural award. In 2003 the North Carolina State Senate honored Bayes with a resolution of thanks for the contributions of the St. Andrews Press, the *St. Andrews Review*, and the Writers' Forum to the fine arts of the State. He is an honorary lifetime member of the Oregon State Poetry Association and of the N.C. Poetry Council.

Bayes' papers prior to 1968 are at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, with the exception of some papers on the release of Ezra Pound, which are at Harvard. His papers since 1968 are archived at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Franz Grebner

I DON'T KNOW WHEN I first met Ron Bayes. My memory is terrible. I came to Davidson College from the northeast in 1964, and Ron came to St. Andrews from Oregon in 1968. Sometime shortly after that we began the practice of sharing writers, mostly poets who would make the circuit—the writer's circuit founded, I believe, by Guy Owen. Sometimes I would drive to Laurinburg to pick up a writer or deliver a writer who had been at Davidson. Among the writers we shared were Joel Oppenheimer and Carolyn Kizer.

The one Ron likes to talk about the most is Basil Bunting, the great British poet who was at one time high on the list of candidates for Poet Laureate of England. Bunting was scheduled to read at Davidson before going to St. Andrews, and the legendary director of the Davidson College Union, C. Shaw Smith, evidently thought that the British poet, despite his distinction, would not draw a sufficient audience without a warm-up act. So he invited a gentleman in overalls with a performing pig—Ron remembers the act being called “Uncle Porky and the Heavy.” Which was the pig and which was the man seems to be a moot point. Jonathan Williams, who was also in Davidson that night—April 15, 1976—refers to the man in a postcard as “Uncle Heavy.” Whatever the name, Basil Bunting arrived at Laurinburg steaming with anger over having been upstaged by a performing pig. And Ron gleefully tells the story virtually every time I see him, to remind me that Davidson is not quite so intellectual as it would like to appear. I don't remember the evening, and if I drove Basil Bunting to Laurinburg, I don't remember that either. But I love the story, and I love Ron.

Ron Bayes was essentially responsible for the start of my career as a poet. He had come to St. Andrews, founded the *St. Andrews Review* and the Writer's Forum, and initiated the writing program that would lead students to a B.F.A. in literature, a remarkable undergraduate program. I started writing poetry in the early '70's after the death of my daughter, and by the time of the visit of Uncle Porky and the Heavy I was beginning to think about teaching creative writing at Davidson. I started sending poems to Ron, and we began to make more frequent visits between Laurinburg and Davidson.

In 1989 St. Andrews Press published *The Girl in the Yellow Raincoat*, my first collection of poems. It also published *A Small Thing Like a Breath*, my second collection, and *The Search for Wonder in the Cradle of the World*, my third. Without Ron's generous support and leadership, this would not have happened.

Just last year, when Kathryn Stripling Byer, then North Carolina's Poet Laureate, was unable to fulfill her commitment to speak to the N.C. Poetry Society about the legendary Sam Ragan, I called Ron at the last minute. He drove over to Southern Pines, talked about his friendship with Sam, and read some of Sam's poems. I know of no one, except Sam Ragan himself, who has done more for poetry in the state of North Carolina. "Ron has done more to carry on the 'live tradition' than anyone I know. That needs to be recognized as a fact," says Ron's former student Kemp Gregory. The centerpiece of that tradition, the Writer's Forum, which takes place at St. Andrews virtually every Thursday night, is astonishing. We could never do that at Davidson. No one would come. At the Writers Forum, there is always an audience, and always a lively one. It's a very special tradition, which owes everything to Ron.

So I thank you, Ron, for what you have brought to us in North Carolina, and what you have given to me. Your wisdom, your experience, and your marvelous sense of humor that never ceases to surprise, will remain a part of all those lives you have touched.

*Tony Abbott*

Anthony S. Abbott is professor emeritus of English at Davidson College. He is the author of two novels, including the award-winning *Leaving Maggie Hope*, and five books of poetry, the most recent of which is *New and Selected Poems 1989-2009*. He is currently president of the NC Poetry Society.

## FINDING BAYES

A majestic onscreen Sean Connery in demeanor,  
Casually dressed for personal appeasement,  
A connoisseur of literature,  
Irish-influenced,  
Poetically driven and compelled to arouse,  
Stimulating the minds of aspiring youths:  
An instructor who teaches with the stories  
A grandfather tells the children on his lap.  
A poison grows, eats at his flesh,  
Slowly pummels his soul.  
Yet he smiles,  
Expounds a genius rivaling Yeats',  
Implodes from the knowledge that he would dare to portray.  
Insight refined for seventy years  
Although he seems timeless.  
He fights the negative aura of criticizing poets  
And with the aspirations he still dares to tackle.  
An angel,  
Speculating about what the world will say of his shine in time.  
How I feel is irrelevant.  
I think Ron's pen is where the premise is!

*Gilbert Abraham*

Gilbert A. N. Abraham is a 2004 graduate of St. Andrews Presbyterian College and the 2004 winner of the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poetry Prize for the Eastern Portion of North Carolina. A native of Laurel, MD , Gilbert resides in Fayetteville, N.C. with his wife, Noelle.



THE NIGHT BEFORE I LEFT Laurinburg for good, back in early January '74, Robert came over to the house to say goodbye. We were both guys out of college but living in the old college town, working jobs in the real world and about to go our own ways. If memory serves, we sat around the kitchen table at the Grass House that night, waxing creative in the oddball way we did with one another. Peppermint schnapps and animal tranquilizers somehow got involved, and things got a little confused as the night went on. So it's a good thing I'd already packed for my grand bon voyage come the morn.

But this is not about leaving a world behind. This is about arriving and intersecting with those who pushed me down a life-changing path before I even knew it. I was certainly unaware of a direction when I headed off for college, landing in Laurinburg, N.C. in 1968 with vague Christian beliefs still hanging around, a desire to please my folks by attending school, and a strong yearning to stay the hell out of Viet Nam. I didn't have particularly high expectations, and I possessed no lofty goals. And I certainly didn't know what I was getting into when I moved to that clash of small town outlook and liberal elitist cultures.

The outlook for me thriving in that environment dimmed fast, but luckily I hooked up with a pair of upperclass fellows who took me under their wings and put me in good graces with the English professors at school. I had no interest in English in particular, but I liked these new folks I met, students and teachers alike. Somehow I was accepted as a mildly interesting and harmless guy who was open to most anything. The English professors had amazing parties and they were regular, fun-loving people who could be bright and down-to-earth at the same time.

I ended up an English major as a result, and it was not difficult or a bad thing. I had a natural interest in writing, and many of the students in the department caught my attention with their talents. I fell under the spell of Doctors White and Overholser, and found myself surrounded by creative, "out there" friends and teachers.

But maybe the most “out there” of all was Ron Bayes. From the git-go it was clear he was running a race apart from most. Ron and I weren’t particularly close during my college days, and we did not become friends until long after I left St. Andrews. But that does not rule out the importance he played for me during my stay in school. I was no poet and not a particularly gifted writer, and I’m sure he gave me a break largely because I was best friends with some of his best students.

But, thinking about it, maybe “gave me a break” is a poor choice of description. Maybe what he did was encourage me in spite of myself. Maybe he encouraged me because it came natural to him; it came natural to him to read a kid’s writing and tell that kid, “Oh, that’s ok” or “that line stinks.” And maybe it was this encouragement that helped me see that it didn’t matter the level of acceptance or the dubious beauty of an idea. Maybe what mattered was the process, the attempt, the bouncing of ideas off of other ideas that often led to strokes of true creativity. What mattered was that nurturing led to maturity and served a warning to a life filled with beauty and sorrow. Ron, in his way, helped me understand some of that. Ron Bayes helped me believe a little bit more in myself, and there can be no better gift one man can give another.

*Ames Arnold*

Ames Arnold continues to be surly and cynical, in short a civilized person, even 60 years on.

## MY TEACHERS, MY TREES

*To Ron Bayes*

Who is the ghost I see in trees  
when they clap  
their leaves and wink ?

We translate the follicles of our consciousness  
as presences rather  
than ourselves.  
But they answer back  
and bid us answer too.

The ghost moans sometimes  
from somewhere afar.  
But when the sun is out and  
divides itself into the dazzling many,  
it laughs aloud.

*Daphne Athas*

Daphne Athas' latest work is *Chapel Hill in Plain Sight: Notes from the Other Side of the Tracks*, a memoir of Chapel Hill. She is the author of the novels *Cora* and *Entering Ephesus*, both winners of the Sir Walter Raleigh Award. She has written essays, poetry, and travel books, including *Greece by Prejudice* and *Crumbs for the Bogey Man*. Her stories, reviews, literary criticism, and other non-fiction works have appeared in *Hudson Review*, *Transatlantic Review*, *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, *The World and I*, *Frank*, *East and West*, and many others. She taught creative writing at UNC-CH from 1968 through 2009.

## CONVERSATION WITH RON BAYES

The following is excerpted from an interview conducted by Joseph Bathanti and published in *The Arts Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3, December, 1988, under the title, "It All Gets Back to the Great Chain of Being": Ron Bayes on Poetry, Politics, Teaching, Magic, Mysticism, Mishima, Pound, Olson, Black Mountain, and Other Particulars."

*JB: The St. Andrews Review and the St. Andrews Press, both of which you founded, have survived 20 years when larger, more established operations in more advantageous locations have gone under. I know of no other college that has had ongoing for 20 years a reading series which one week might feature Carolyn Kizer or James Dickey and the next a city policeman or a college freshman taking his or her first crack at writing poems. How has this tradition endured?*

RB: Ezra Pound is the answer—the idea of the live tradition in poetry. St. Andrews is one of the few places that has paid attention to that. My involvement with this type of thing began when I taught at Eastern Oregon State College many years ago. Kenneth Patchen was sick and didn't have any insurance. A letter went out to writers around the country to raise some money for Patchen's back surgery. So we held a poetry reading, charged two bits apiece, and earned 20 dollars when we thought we'd be lucky if we earned 10. So that's where I got my teeth into the idea of "this is what's going on." I relate it back to Pound's dictum of the live tradition: "Hear thunder, seek to include." That's the whole thing.

*JB: Donald Keene, professor of Japanese literature at Columbia University, has said that he knows "no one in America who has been more energetic and effective in that endeavor of introducing Japanese literature to the general American public" than you. What about your romance with Japan and its literature?*

RB: I'd love nothing more than to address that. Nothing probably more confuses people. I think the problem is that it's

particularly difficult on one level and absolutely innocent and simple on another. Let me take the reverse. I believe that people do understand each other a great deal. When you get down to it, jingoists always like to say—the Kipling thing—that “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” But the important line in that ballad is, “Till two strong men meet face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth.” That line has gotten lost a great deal. It's nothing strange that the two people I most admire in the literary world are T.S. Eliot and Yukio Mishima. By the same token I feel guilt-ridden at not mentioning Pound, because he is one who's exemplified standing forward. If there is a person I had to be like, it would be Ezra, because he fought the fight. But the whole thing is to break down the big concrete wall of stupidity that can't listen. Life is good, work is necessary, responsibility is an absolute, and love is the only thing that sweetens it.

*JB: The first thing I read of Yukio Mishima's was Patriotism, and I was overwhelmed by it. When I read his biography and learned that he was foreshadowing his own death in Patriotism, I was completely knocked out. That kind of commitment, that kind of belief!*

RB: That kind of sense of humor! Everyone wants to make him deadly serious. We're all going to die.

I went to Japan in the mid '60s to teach for a year with the University of Maryland overseas program. New Directions publisher James Laughlin, who'd been such a wonderful friend over the years through correspondence, told me that he had just published three Japanese writers, and gave me their books to take along. That was the first time I had encountered Mishima. But I wasn't about to write to him. So I wrote to Laughlin back in New York and asked him to send me Mishima's phone number and address and a letter of introduction. Mishima was noted for his parties, and I received an invitation to a party at his house. Then my orders came through to be in Okinawa at a certain time, which cut out any chance of accepting his invitation. As a Westerner, I studiously tried not to offend anyone. So I went to Okinawa. I was

terribly upset. I bought a fifth of Jack Daniels, retired to my hotel room and read *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*, which was stunning. I felt sorry for myself at not being able to meet the great man at that time. I identified with Mishima because he identified both with the underprivileged and the power structure—the need to have help for everybody. That's why he killed himself. We were both interested in blood and night and death.

*JB: Mishima, at least from my reading, seems like one of those terribly charismatic people that we are occasionally privileged to meet.*

RB: He was the only person I would ever have died for. Of course, after his death they tried to make him into a fascist. But he was exactly what I think one should be in a terribly impossible situation, and that is one who looks with passion and anger at excess. Nobody cared more about the lower class, the economically deprived, the culturally deprived, the educationally deprived. He was absolutely outraged at excess and the privilege of class.

Mishima's great message—or one of his great messages—was that we must honor the beautiful, that which is attained by hard work, long labor, and celebration. I think that's one of the things he was addressing when he said, “Too much chrysanthemum, not enough sword.” Shortly before he killed himself he said, “There is no Japan left.” The irony of it is that at this point it's up to America to allow the beauty of Japan to come back.

I think the importance of action has always been implicit in my writing. I remember going to see Antonioni's movie, *Blow-up*, in Tokyo. I was so offended by it that I was still outraged the next day when I went to dinner with Mishima. I remember saying that although Sartre was a communist and I considered myself a conservative—although I'm a liberal Republican, “the L word” has been so distorted that we may as well say “conservative” in context—I admired Sartre. The message I got from Sartre, despite his being a rigid communist, was that any action was better than no action. Mishima agreed. He was often accused of being an extreme right-winger, which

I never quite understood. I think he was just an idealist, and the wings didn't matter. But anyhow, that action factor comes back to Pound. His whole life is posited on poetry as a vehicle for making things happen, and he was right. I could not cope with Auden's conception that "poetry makes nothing happen." It does. It must. It has to, whether on an intimate private level or on a wider political level.

*JB: Pound continues to be elusive as a man and as a poet. What about the ever-burning question of his sanity?*

RB: The most wonderful response to that is made by Theodore Roethke, when he says, "What is madness but nobility of soul at odds with circumstance?" Age and decrepitude and madness are everyone's concerns. It's just that poets think more about those things, and they write it down. I think Pound was a noble person "at odds with circumstance." He may have been very wrong about some things, but who isn't from time to time? Who wouldn't be crazy after being locked up in a metal cage with a concrete floor in the middle of nowhere with people forbidden to speak to him?

It was a time of madness. Pound had been denied the right to leave Italy. He tried to get to Switzerland, but he was turned back at the border. And we'll never know if he was turned back because some of Franklin Roosevelt's bureaucrats thought they might ingratiate themselves with the administration because of Pound having been so verbally anti-Roosevelt, or whether it was just one of those bureaucratic glitches. And that probably had a good deal to do, too, with the subsequent vituperation against Roosevelt in the infamous radio broadcasts from Rome.

*JB: St. Andrews College has had a singular relationship with the legacy of Black Mountain College. Jonathan Williams, Joel Oppenheimer, Robert Creeley, Bucky Fuller, Merce Cunningham, and John Cage, among others, have appeared at St. Andrews over the years. How has the tradition of Black Mountain infiltrated St. Andrews?*

RB: Whitney Jones was chairman of the English department

in the early 70s, and he used that as a springboard in his own fertile imagination to plot a Black Mountain College Festival in 1974. He sensed exactly what you described. He applied for grants, so we were able to go ahead with the festival, which Whitney chaired.

Somebody once teasingly referred to me as a “visionary mystic.” I do believe in the mystical, I believe in convergences, and I consider myself a muse poet. I’ve always considered the ongoingness of things. What does the Bible say? “There’s nothing new under the sun.” Charles Olson used to quote Alfred North Whitehead, I think it was—that business if you draw a straight line long enough it makes a circle. I know a lot of writers and artists consider themselves original, but I think that is a mistaken idea. I consider myself a conduit. I feel that way about the Black Mountain movement. I feel that way about Pound and about Mishima.

It began with that Patchen benefit. Then we got a grant and invited Philip Whalen. We became good friends. Philip later wrote me from San Francisco about a gathering of the Black Mountain clan. This was 1963. Creeley was teaching in Vancouver, and he and Warren Tallman put together a Black Mountain reunion. That’s where my Black Mountain thing took wing. I already knew and liked Philip’s work. I didn’t understand Creeley at the time, and hadn’t encountered Robert Duncan or Olson. So there I was, one of the squares. But I got to know Olson well, which surprised me, because he was in demand, and I’ve always been fairly reticent under such circumstances.

At a farewell party he and I somehow ended up on the back porch, in an extended conversation, and he told me a story of his last day in Yucatan, when he was there on his Guggenheim fellowship. This old Mayan priest came out of the jungle and approached Olson, who had mastered some Mayan. The priest presented Olson with a gift—a human thigh bone with Mayan glyphs carved into it—that had been worshiped by his people since prehistory as the thigh-bone of Quetzalcoatl, the Mayan culture hero. He further explained that he had had a vision that a great white man would be in the Yucatan and would be leaving at a certain time, and that this



central object of worship of his tribe should be given to the white man because he was the reincarnation of Quetzalcoatl – and this happened to be Olson.

*JB: You mentioned earlier that not only did you not know how to read Creeley, but you didn't know how to hear him. This seems to be one of the central dilemmas for anyone approaching poetry, especially for the first time.*

RB: In my classes I use a film that students at San Francisco State College made of Theodore Roethke, in which Roethke says that teaching begins when there is reciprocity, when the teacher starts learning from the student. My students brought me to Creeley, and suddenly it was just one of those things! You try so hard, and then you relax, and enlightenment comes. Creeley was using the truncated line in much of his work, and I just couldn't hear him; there was some interference between my eye and my ear and the page and my understanding. It took students convincing me that they could hear him to get me to the point where I eased up enough to hear him.

Hearing can be a bridge over what seem like complex waters. The first time I met Ezra Pound's daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz, who has been to St. Andrews dozens of times, was at the airport in Fayetteville, North Carolina. I had been an admirer of Pound's since I was 19, but I am not a linguist, and I had always felt a little guilty about that. But I finally arrived at the point where I've been ever since, which is this: Even if I like somebody, if we're not going to be friends I'd like to know it from the outset, rather than have it come as a surprise to either of us. So I said to Mary as we were driving from Fayetteville to Laurinburg that I wasn't a linguist and that there were a lot of historical facts in *The Cantos* which eluded me, but that I'd always read them aloud or heard them at least. Even if I read them silently, I read them through my ear. I wanted to confess my weaknesses! She replied that that was exactly the way Ezra wanted them read, and that when he used foreign languages he used them as much for the music as anything else—to create a complete musical fabric. So I breathed a great sigh of relief!

## READING AT ST. ANDREWS

*For Ronald H. Bayes*

Ron's middle name  
is Homer. He lives on  
Homer Street (in  
Laurinburg). Down  
the street, the American  
Legion Field – where  
someone's just hit a homer  
(but not Ron). The ball  
finally comes down in the middle  
of the street, then leaps  
off the concrete over  
cars and houses and falls  
in Ron's roses: the monastic  
white ball, its red-stitched  
vesture, roses the red  
of Our Lady's mantle.  
A spring evening aching  
with beauty. Furious  
Azaleas, dogwood,  
daffodils. *Jesus*  
*Christ*. The dear birds  
squint when they beat  
down to gaze at them.  
Their wings remind us  
why Ron came here.  
It gets warm fast.  
We're in the kitchen.  
Charles Olson's "The Port Of,"  
handwritten on a postcard  
by Olson himself, is  
framed above the light  
switch. The postmark:  
*Gloucester*.  
A colossal brooding  
black and white

oil of Mishima,  
 head and torso,  
 on one wall. *The great*  
*man*, Ron calls Mishima.  
 Beautiful Grace  
 Loving Gibson is here.  
 Prust, Dub White  
 and his blazing red beret,  
 Bushoven, Carl  
 Walters, called *Carlos*  
 that night. We've been talking  
 about the students in wheelchairs,  
*Wheelies*, at Saint Andrews:  
 the passionate love among them.  
*God talks in the trees:*  
 Merton said it. The way poets  
 always say it. It's  
 7:45. My reading:  
 8 o'clock in Orange  
 Dormitory. Since 5:30:  
 Jack Daniels and beer  
 chasers (toddlies Ron,  
 the smoker of big cigars,  
 calls them). We've laughed  
 and laughed. I'm explaining  
 the rosary to June Milby.  
 Joan cradles Thorstein,  
 Ron's Poundian copper  
 tabby, in her lap.  
 She's smiling. My baby  
 in a Pilgrim frock. Fong's  
 is going to deliver Chinese.

*Joseph Bathanti*

Joseph Bathanti's six books of poetry include *Restoring Sacred Art* (2010 Roanoke Chowan Prize). His other works include the novels *East Liberty* (2001 Carolina Novel Award) and *Coventry*, (2006 Novello Literary Award), and the story collection, *The High Heart* (Spokane Prize). He teaches at Appalachian State University.

HISTORY  
of the  
TURTLE

I-IV

by  
Ronald H. Bayes



*Gow: A Clot of Human* (Yozo Shibuya)  
Cover of *History of the Turtle*, Olivant Press, 1970

## “MURMURING BITS”: RON BAYES'S UMAPINE BOOKS

### 1.

IN ATLANTA IN 1983 I heard a poetry performance by William Harmon which was a revelation unto me, and also, I shall hope, to the faithful two score or so of other listeners in the room. Maestro Harmon hardly “read” any poems at all, but rendered a seemingly impromptu monologue all prickly with jokes, puns, anecdotes, drifty musings, quotations from sources high and low, parodies, complaints, and personal asides. Now and again he would threaten to read a poem and then fail to do so, or would ease in to and out of a poem without alerting us that that's what it was.

I thought: Now this is very odd! Why does this performance remind me of Ron Bayes's books?

Then I thought: Well, Fred you dope, that's the point!

One of those matters you pretend to understand in some intellectual fashion but never expect to see demonstrated:

Poetry not merely as a figuration of words upon a page but as an attitude, a continual reception and transmission, experience relentlessly becoming poetry because the poet's mind is trained to perceive and express every scrap of raw material as poetry, a wide wild net nylon-strong and gossamer-light which nothing escapes. A prosy kind of poetry which does not attempt to approach the speech of ordinary men but rather to approximate the thought processes of extraordinary minds, “one of those upon whom nothing is lost.”

A music large enough in concept to absorb any random noise and transfigure it to musical design. As per the ambitions of Charles Ives and John Cage.

Anyhow, it was during this playful performance by Harmon that I began to appreciate more finely the work of Ronald H. Bayes.

2.

*Appreciate*, I say; I do not say *understand*.

If I've got it right, one does not "understand" this sort of poetry in the way he is allowed to "understand" poetry by Donne or Browning or Frost. When I first thought of writing about Bayes's work I expected to do so in the old trite-and-rue grad school fashion. Find the overall design, list the major themes and motifs, harrow the thumb-worn encyclopedias and mythological handbooks. You come up with a respectable-looking article called "The Influence of Vico's Homeric Sociology on Bayes's *Umapine Tetralogy*." Rococo garland of footnotes, accented with splashes of Greek. Search out a mythological figure the poet seems to identify himself with (here it might well be Actaeon) and ride both the hapless blokes to staggers. Then you tell the world you have written something *definitive*, hot damn. Isn't it wonderful how swiftly Pegasus takes the bit?

Well, that sort of thing doesn't hurt the poem; nothing will do the poem harm but neglect and/or disappearance. But in this case such reference-mongering seems to have a special irrelevance. The cultural referents in the Umapine books – and they are legion – are not concepts and names that the poet has deliberately sought in order to illuminate or enhance his meanings, but terms that he can no longer help thinking in.

That is the difference. The Umapine poems are not a finished product that a reader works backward from, but are instead a frame of mind, a way of thinking, that he tries to catch up with as soon as possible. Perhaps the first impression an innocent reader – if there are any of that sort left alive – might come by is that he is three Scotches behind.

3.

It's not a new thing under the sun. Olson's *Maximus* is much like Umapine, and Zukofsky's *A*, Williams's *Paterson*, Bunting's *Briggflats*. So, to some extent, are Crane's *The Bridge*, Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and of course, always, Pound's *Cantos*.

But these poems are already respectable ancestors by the time we get to Bayes. Their aims, designs, and methods are so thoroughly taken for granted that that whole quality is thought of merely as an idiom. You wanna write a poem? The methods of collage, cultural overlay, fragmented impulse are now as available and as firmly established as, say, blank verse or rhymed quatrains. The fact of the loose, broken, and highly allusive form has long ceased to matter. The important thing is the sensibility the poet brings to this accepted form.

Which is also true of blank verse and rhymed quatrains, but not more true.

What's most fun is to accost this sensibility, fresh in the idiom it has chosen to speak in, to enjoy the interlacement of sensibility and idiom, of observation and illusion, of High Art and Low (gully-low) Kulch. To meet the poem before the annotators bury it. I don't know how they do it, but the scholarly commentators are able to bury a poem first and embalm it afterward.

4.

Some humdrum facts may or may not be helpful. Like these:

Umapine is some place in Oregon which probably only Bayes's poetry saves from Cimmerian obscurity. The four volumes in the Umapine Tetralogy are *History of the Turtle* (1970), *Porpoise* (1974), *Tokyo Annex* (1977), and *Fram* (1979). There is no "plot," no linear progression of events; we simply observe the poet's mind reacting to, commenting upon, current and ancient history, memories, impressions, reading material, and anything else that crosses his mind's-eye line of sight. The poem is full of homages because Bayes, as a warm appreciator, has a large number of personal heroes; there is a partial but longish list of these in *Fram*, which includes (predictably) Pound, Williams, Rimbaud, Lorca, and (unpredictably) Dickens, de Gaulle, Lotte Lenya, and Thomas Mann. The poem is full of Joycean puns, even though *Turtle* announces early on that the poet will forswear puns. The poem begins with a train ride out of Chicago and "travel" is one of its broadest themes, so broad that it amounts to a method of composition.

In fact, many of Bayes's themes actually become compositional methods; that is one advantage of collage form. There are certain recurring leitmotifs and refrains throughout; sometimes they remain stable, often they are transformed by punning or by ironically changed context. Bayes spends a lot of time in airports. "Walking about under the trees, murmuring bits of Euripides": a refrain, more or less stable, that shows up frequently; its resemblance to Eliot's famous women talking of Michelangelo is deliberate, a homage, a joke, and a commentary on the sensibility that produces Umapine. Quotations from Euripides are few or none. The important loci of the poem are Europe, the United States, Iceland, Japan, and Mexico. The external shape of Umapine is slender lyric embroidery upon a turgid mass of world cultural history, interspersed with raw samplings of this material in the form of learned quotations, letters, news clips, TV shows, pop music, vernacular conversation. Bayes, like Pound, enjoys recording some of the more idiotic things U.S. Senators say; as in *The Cantos*, this material soon dates itself hopelessly – Bayes's Dirksen is as hard to remember as Pound's Bankhead. The quaint aspect of present time already becoming past time is one of the themes (and methods) of the poem.

Three of the four volumes of Umapine have no page numbers, making it extremely awkward to locate passages. An individual section of Umapine is called a passus, but the poem doesn't much resemble *Piers Plowman*. Pound has the knack of obliterating academic demarcations of historical time, he can make a conversation with Yeats sound as if it took place in 344 A.D. in Byzantium; Bayes shows this ability and it is one of the qualities which makes Umapine read, in its largest context, as an elegy. "Fram" is the name of an oil filter, and *filter* might be one definition of the poem; Bayes probably also intends "Fram" as a made-up preterite of Old English *fremman*, "to make, to shape (a poem)." (The pluperfect would then be *From*.) Much of the poem is personal, and there are references not really intended for a general public to pick up. Who, e.g., is Swaffar? Who is Hammad? Who Al, Asta, Schaumburg, Jack, and Mary?

Makes no difference who these folks are, finally, since



what they add to the poem (besides funny and/or weird remarks) is the cluttered texture of daily living, random acquaintance. Umapine, despite the fact that it is quite a long poem, is basically reticent; the poet gives away little of his personal life or private thought; he gives us only what his carefully cultivated poetic consciousness registers – I can't decide whether this reticence amounts to good manners or annoying tease. There is a fair batch of political pronouncement, but hard to say what stripe it is. There is a lot of homily, all of it honorable, little of it embarrassing.

Etc etc etc etc etc etc.

One could make an infinite catalogue of this sort of remark about the speaker of the poem, and that would be maybe the best method of criticism: not to try to penetrate Umapine but to surround it with the kinds of observation the poem itself practices. But let me list a few perceptions the earnest scholars will probably not bother with when they come to examine the work.

1. The speaker of the poem is striving to become a good person; he has despaired of becoming a good citizen.
2. There are a number of “hidden” themes in the work. One is homosexuality; another is pedagogy.
3. Where earlier poets saw raw ignorance and crass indifference as the worst of modern evils, Bayes finds it in physical cruelty, brutal but ordinary. This subject defeats him.
4. Where earlier poets used cosmopolitanism as a criticism of provincialism, Umapine sees the local individual as a victim of tasteless global cosmopolitanism.
5. The great longing in Umapine is not for large civil order and justice but for a defensible personal quietism.
6. The use of foreign languages is not really inherent in Bayes's mentality. Macaronic phrases in Umapine are merely ornamental, and the poem might be better off without them.
7. The poet's sense of irony (especially of the ironic pun) gives him no rest. It is part of the consciousness he has successfully formed, but it has become something of a Frankenstein's monster, and there are times when he

would like to be rid of it. Briefly: Bayes wonders if the construction of his poetry has not damaged a central innocence in him.

8. Bayes likes best the purely lyrical passages that most readers will like best. It is his sense of duty that causes him to include the passages of contrasting raw data. He has finally made a wise decision.
9. There are occasional lapses of self-confidence, passages of doubt about the justification of the project. These are unwarranted. Umapine is an interesting and useful work. Engaging . . . It is characteristic of poems like Umapine – Pound's, Olson's, Williams's – that they spend a large number of lines talking about themselves, about the difficulties of getting themselves written. This is time spent in disarming the reader, an unnecessary ploy.
10. The didactic impulse that drives Pound, Olson, Bunting and the others is shown much more modestly and uncertainly in Bayes. Those poets have a list of Holy Texts they believe will save civilization if only every man jack of us will get them by heart. Confucius, Mayan codices, the Adams letters – whatever. Bayes has a curriculum, too, but it is for enjoyment rather than salvation. One is grateful to him that we don't always have to be saving civilization.

5.

My love, who ever you were,  
not stir.

Be sure  
we are in air

Precisely there.

(from *Fram*)

Not that Bayes isn't interested in saving civilization, if it could be done. "yet/*Amerika*, 1963:/the farting plastic mustard bottle/sets the theme." These lines and the scores of others like them are not written by a complacent person. Vulgarity, raw greed, mindless journalism, bubblegum politics, and proud ignorance are not things the poet admires. But he doesn't use them as pretexts to maunder in lightless despair. He finds a gleam of hope in the very pervasiveness of popular culture. The stanza continues: "The unity IS here – town, metrop, village-in-the-sticks:/we are one,/ & our efficiency is notable." (*Turtle*.)

This notable efficiency keeps an immense population physically alive, and that is perhaps a good thing. That it keeps them spiritually alive is not a feasible proposition. The lovely old culture that brought this savage new one into being is deeply moribund; even Lady Gregory's Coole Park is dying from it. "Her tree carved in by every pimple faced hardon in the county./The swans long/gone." One reason that many ingenious lovely things are gone is that they no longer seem sheer miracle to the multitude; the multitude is absorbed in the miracle of itself, everyone is able to feel himself securely and amazedly part of a mob. Even if it turns out to be a lynch mob, he can be confident of finding congenial company in it. *Mon semblable – mon frere . . .*

Not exactly a happy situation, and one that makes Umapine even more than the *Cantos* the poem of the Outcast Wanderer. The poet visits nation and nation, metropolis after metropolis, as the dark unbidden guest, the seeker whose obscure but genuine quest leads him to observe everywhere the tribes in their industrial agonies treating one another with shopworn indifferent brutality.

Which is precisely why so much of the poem is given over to celebration of beauty, friendship, quiet thought, courageous thinkers, simplicity, and – yes – holiness. These are the respites, the refreshment, the Wanderer has found along his journey. He has found much love, too, though it never gives

him a lasting happiness. He has kept, however shakily, a faith that somewhere within, or past the mass of, the detritus of the contemporary disaster the genuine and the holy still endure. "All of the shit at the foot of Fuji,' I said . . . / What you gotta wade through to/get to God." (*Fram.*) That's a funny, sad, and distinctly modern observation, but not one that John Bunyan's Pilgrim would disagree with.

My point here, though, is that this persona, poet as Outcast Wanderer, is not an image of self-pity or frustrated anger or longing for immortal fame. This persona, the man of no fortune and with a name to come, is a figure necessarily created when the poet has made his sensibility an all-inclusive register of cultural phenomena. Once the poet has constructed this mechanism, once he has tested and attuned its sensitivities, then he has to feed it material to register, to weigh and compare and judge. So he sends it out journeying in the world, looking at one nation and another, this polis and that. The goal of its quest is not so definite as the Holy Grail or the kiss of Brunhilde; the goal is only to see and hear and taste distinctions, to gain a kind of comparative knowledge of how things are, moment to moment at this place and the other. The method of the quest, the schedule of wandering, is aleatory, firmly determined at random because only random samplings are admissible evidence. The Umapine poet goes to Iceland and Japan, but he could as easily have gone to Singapore and Rhode Island. His largest conclusions would be the same, but the flavors of the poem would be importantly different.

A discouraging fact results. The poem can be stopped or abandoned or left open-ended (as Umapine is), but it can never be a completed design. The world has an infinite amount of material to pour upon this sensibility, and once the sensibility is in working order it is able to deal, in its own special limited way, with all of it. *The Cantos* is incomplete, and the Maximus poems, and *Paterson*, etc., etc. Crane could easily have added more sections to *The Bridge*, etc., Of all the great travel poems only Dante's is complete and – really! – you have to be kind of sappy to think of the *Commedia* as a travel poem.

Although the overall design of Umapine is not memorable, and perhaps discernible only to the poet, the experience of reading the poem as a whole is memorable indeed. A mode of perceiving, "a way of happening," remains in the mind and informs one's most ordinary daily experience. This mode of perception wears off in a little time, as all artistic encounter seems to do, but who can say how deeply it has sunk in, how much it has become ineluctable?

7.

Not that the faults are there  
Not how the faults got there  
Not how you learn to live with faults  
But how you live with them

Not to change person  
But realize person  
Live with that person  
Wedded

(from *Tokyo Annex*)

8.

Silly as I am, I'm not silly enough to try to make some final critical estimate of Umapine, and I would dread to meet the literary stockbroker who does attempt that sort of thing. When the new poetic idiom the one Umapine employs was created this century, it rejuvenated Wordsworth's notion of literature as an immense cathedral toward whose design every poet contributes. The idiom, established mostly by Whitman and Pound and Eliot in English, is so wildly democratic that all the large-scale efforts seem to include one another.

That is, Umapine could be thought of as an "annex" to *The Cantos*, and *The Cantos* thought of as a nave crossed by the transept of *Paterson*, and so forth. Pound, Bunting, Olson, Bayes, et al., have collaborated upon an enormous multi-volume picaresque novel in verse whose hero is THAT sensibility and whose narrative is the story of its adventures. It is not an epic, not even by Pound's definition of epic as a poem

containing history, because the form is too open to contain anything. It can exhibit an endless variety of history but it cannot contain it (in the way that the *Aeneid*, say, and *Pharisaical* "contain" Roman history) because containment violates the essential method which makes the poems possible.

Bayes, in choosing that specific idiom, has chosen to add to that enormous edifice. It is an act of pride as well as one of homage.

The fact I can attest to is that he has held up his end of the collaboration, has written honestly, earnestly, gracefully, and thoughtfully. He has contributed individual character and new materials to his part in the endeavor, and he shall receive more honor for his work than I have been able to give him here. That gargantuan edifice has grown not only larger but also stronger because of his labor.

9.

Fragments of mind these  
cages & journeys  
carry encounters  
maybe a moment  
of loves & friends  
Time telescopes  
indeed the same.  
& in what season Attic rain?  
Cages & journeys? Ends?

(from *Turtle*)

*Fred Chappell*

Fred Chappell, born in Canton, N.C., was educated at Duke University. Chappell has written 14 books of verse, eight novels, two volumes of stories, and one of criticism. In 1987 he received the O. Max Gardner Award, the highest teaching award bestowed by the University of North Carolina system, and in 1988 was named the Burlington Industries Professor of English at UNC-Greensboro, where he has taught since 1964. In 1997 he was named Poet Laureate of North Carolina.

## NEGATIVE SPACE

It's where I go when I zone  
out, entranced, the entrance to ozone

blue, that Orphic note, the Om  
of snow on snow, zinc-white

Zen hole in the inkless  
oval of the O or zero.

It's the helium halo around  
the moon, the echoing O, O, O,

Rimbaud's omega  
of the hallowed vowel,

the ohm of the dial tone,  
the Zenith screen

dissolving into fields of white  
noise and burning snow.

It's the osmosis of light  
on Sugimoto's photographs of fog

taken morning, afternoon and night  
over the Ligurian sea,

opaque layers of vapor and mist  
exposed on Cibachrome.

It's the gesso-white canvas  
no brush stroke disturbs,

the vanishing point where heaven  
and earth converge

in the void of the universe,  
in the holy word.

*Beth Copeland*

Beth Copeland, a 1973 graduate of St. Andrews, is an English instructor at Methodist University. Her poetry book, *Traveling Through Glass*, received the 1999 Bright Hill Press Poetry Book Award. Her poems have been published in literary magazines and have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

"When I enrolled at St. Andrews in 1969, I knew I wanted to be a poet. What I didn't know was that Ron Bayes shared my fascination with Japan, the country where I was born and lived as a young child. Finding a poet/mentor who understood my interest in Japanese poetry and Asian culture was an unexpected bonus. When I met Ron, I felt as if I had returned to my homeland.

*Negative Space* was written as an incantation or meditation, an attempt to let the poem reveal itself without interference from me. Allowing it to "be" and to "become" is a lesson I learned from Ron. His purpose was to teach us how to recognize the poems that were already within us, untapped, unformed, and waiting to be released.

Thank you, Bayes *Sensei*."



## THE GESTALT OF RONALD H. BAYES:

### A Personal Reminiscence and Appreciation

I GREW UP in a gritty mill town in Virginia, dreaming of the big world I heard on my transistor radio at night, yearning to do something different than work in the mills. What I wanted to do, I did not know. But much as I loved it, I knew I had to leave my provincial little town to do it.

When I was a teenager, my local role models were my favorite teachers and my minister, but they did not quite fit the hazy romantic conception I had of my future self. Then I heard Bob Dylan and I thought, "That's it, that's the guy!" That is, until a girl at church camp with thick pouty lips and a sexy little mole on her cheek and the longest eyelashes I'd ever seen said to me, "You need to read Dylan Thomas. Where do you think Bobby Dylan got his name from?" On her command, I went all the way to Richmond to find a copy of Thomas' *Collected Poems*, and that book changed my life. Books by Kenneth Patchen and Lawrence Ferlinghetti quickly followed. Although I understood very little of their poetry at first, nonetheless I knew then I wanted to be a poet. But I had no idea what I needed to do to become one.

So I started acting the way I thought a poet might act. I bought an ascot and a tweed jacket and I smoked a pipe. I quoted poetry to friends at every opportunity. I purposely misspelled words in an artistic way. And I wrote some of the worst teenage poetry ever written. My main topics were my love for Jesus and my love for my girlfriend, the intensity of the love being about equal, but tipped slightly toward my girlfriend.

When I graduated from high school, it was an irony that after all that yearning for the larger outside world, I really wasn't ready for it, so I ended up going to a small church-related college in a town even smaller than my own. It turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me, because it was there that I received an international education.

In 1967, St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina, had a young, radical, and stellar faculty and was an oasis of liberal thinking in the very conservative South that surrounded it like so many corn and cotton fields. In my sophomore year, the college hired a relatively unknown poet named Ronald Homer Bayes who would eventually usher St. Andrews into the national and international poetry world through his tireless work as a poet and an impresario. He organized countless readings with eminent poets, poetry conferences, writing honors and awards, and student trips abroad to the home of Ezra Pound's daughter in Italy. He founded the *St. Andrews Review*, St. Andrews Press, the Fortner Writers Forum, and the Writer-in-Residence program. It was because of Ron and through his efforts that the B.F.A. program in creative writing exists. But, most importantly, through his teaching and by his example Ron would create, nurture, and mentor hundreds of student poets over the decades, and certainly thousands of lovers of poetry, and send them out into the larger world.

In my case, and I'm sure I speak for many others, Ron Bayes taught me—no, showed me—how to be what I yearned to be.

This soft-voiced, unassuming man had lived in what were at the time considered exotic foreign cultures, Japan and Iceland, and had hung out with and befriended a cadre of radical young poets and writers who were just getting started at reshaping American poetry in their own image: Olson, Creeley, Ginsberg, Whalen, Snyder, McClure, Levertov, Kinnell, Kizer—the list goes on and on. Bayes had the foresight to start bringing them to St. Andrews before they became too famous and too expensive for the small college to afford. And he brought African American poets to the campus to perform at a time when they were still not finding a friendly reception for their work in academia.

But in my first encounter with Ron Bayes in my sophomore year, he saved my academic ass. I had not yet taken

any of his classes, but I'd heard of him because my friend and fellow floundering wannabe poet John Lawson had raved about his unorthodox teaching style, more graduate workshop and seminar than undergraduate lecture class. It was near the end of the quarter, and I was struggling through a required basic science curriculum class taught by another new and young professor. There was a major paper due at the end of the quarter that was the largest part of our grade. The paper was supposed to address the intersection of science and the humanities, with a specific nod toward the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French philosopher, Jesuit priest, geologist, and paleontologist.

I had fucked off all quarter doing as little as possible in the science class, except reading the fascinating Chardin, until the day before the big paper was due. There was no way I was going to pull it together overnight. But with nothing to lose except sleep, I stayed up all night writing a long multi-page poem about Chardin and my own primitive ideas about the philosophy of science. Instead of a 20-to-25-page footnoted research paper, I turned in a spontaneously composed 10-page poem in free verse. I was actually quite impressed with myself, but I knew I'd get a failing grade.

A week later the professor passed out the graded papers. I did not receive one. Instead he asked me to stay after class. The way he was staring at me, I knew I was not only going to fail but I going to get a good ass-chewing, too. He told me that since I had not done the assignment, I should fail. But he also said he was intrigued by what I had done. Not knowing much about "modern poetry," he said he had shown my poem to the new poet-in-residence, Ron Bayes. Bayes had liked the poem! Bayes told him the poem was good and told him why. I got a B. I went straight to Bayes' office and introduced myself, where my long and fruitful but unofficial tutelage began.

That long poem is long gone, and most of it, I'm sure, sucked. But I think what Bayes saw was the bravado of the

thing, the struggling tentative voice trying to be heard. And that's what he has heard for four decades in the poetry of every student, not just what is, but what could be.

As he did with all his student poets, Ron took my work seriously and it immediately forced me to take it seriously too, and not just as an individual poet. For me and for my student peers, his classes made us think of ourselves as a community of poets who influenced each other, supported each other, and pushed each other to be better writers. In that first generation of writers and poets at St. Andrews, Bayes inaugurated the community poetry reading that persists today and that still makes young writers understand that they are not alone, that they are part of a community of poets, that poetry is a dialogue, not a monologue. And most importantly, he connected that idea with the idea of the canon, the tradition, by bringing an exciting older generation of poets to the college to perform.

One of these was a young Galway Kinnell who was just beginning to gain traction in the wider poetry world. As students we had no idea who he was. We knew he was the featured performer at our upcoming reading. We knew we would be opening for him as student poets, but we had no idea what an honor that was, given the prestigious position he now occupies in American poetry. The day of the reading, Ron asked me if I would be willing to drive to Fayetteville to pick up Galway, as he was tied up with preparations for the evening.

Frankly, I think that was a very kind lie. I think Ron thought it would be good for me to spend an hour alone in a car exposed to the smoldering poetic intensity of Galway Kinnell. Ron had a way of knowing exactly which poet would do each of us young students the most good. In my case I needed to learn to control my long sprawling lines, to focus my power, and Galway was the poet who was the master of that. He had also been politically involved in the Southern civil rights struggle, as had I in a much more limited way. But Kinnell knew how to tightly control his political impulses in his

poetry so any politics served the poem and not the other way around. That was a lesson I still badly needed to learn.

But more likely I was picked as chauffeur that afternoon because I was one of the few kids with a car. Who knows? What I do know looking back on it is that it was a true gift from Ron. My 1957 beater VW bug made it, barely, both ways, carrying one of the best poets of his generation. I remember asking Ron, how will I know who he is? Ron answered, You'll know him when you see him. But I've never seen him, I replied. You'll know him when you see him, he repeated, inscrutably. He was right.

I didn't even have the sophistication to know I could hold up a sign with his name on it. But as one stiff suit-wearing businessman after another got off that plane, I said to myself each time, it can't be him, or him, or him. None of them looked like poets. Finally there emerged a lanky, craggy faced man with thick dark hair falling into his face and over his collar, wearing a rumpled suit in need of a good pressing, with a wrinkled white shirt and no tie, carrying a beat-up excuse for a briefcase, head leading as he advanced into the terminal, glancing at no one. The image of sartorial cool. Even I, with my caricatured idea of what one looked like, knew I was in the presence of a real poet, certified by life. I took his bag and off we went on an adventure through the Carolina countryside, talking not so much about poetry, as about what he saw out the windows of my VW, including at one point a group of striped men on a roadside chain gang on which he commented with one word, Sad. At some point, either then or years later, I realized he really was talking about poetry, but it was the content, the impulse, the real life experiences that inspire poetry, that unknown to me, we had discussed.

That night several of us students read before Kinnell did. Then we sat amazed to hear for the first time, among many others, Galway's rendition from memory of his primal poem "The Bear." I remember John Lawson and I looking at each other in astonishment and realizing how lucky we were to be there hearing what we heard, all of it engineered, of course, by Ron.

Later, after a class when Ron returned my copy of the poem I had read before Kinnell, he wrote on it that Galway had told him he liked it. I doubt that Galway Kinnell gushed over my poetry, though I'm sure he was polite about it to Ron. But can you imagine the impact that had on me as a young fledgling poet, the confidence it gave me? Ron was a master at doing or saying the thing that would make a young poet think about him or herself differently.

Part of thinking about yourself differently as a poet involves writing poems that are different from the poems you normally write. Ron knew that as young writers his students needed exposure to diversity, and diversity he provided. His classes were explorations of the new "schools" of poetry that had sprung up around the country in the previous two decades largely outside the traditional academic climate. The Black Mountain College poets, the San Francisco Renaissance, the New York school, the Southwest poets, the poets from the Northwest where Ron had begun his career, and the new Asian and Japanese poets. The poets Ron exposed us to were still alive, which meant that poetry was a living art, and being a poet was a contemporary profession.

Many of these movements had developed as a continuation of the Modernism and Imagism of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams and as a reaction to the conservative return to formalism in the academy that was underway in the 1950s. But Ron was always for inclusion, never exclusion.

Ron was clearly a Modernist and Pound scholar, but despite the Modernist antipathy to traditional form, as our teacher Ron forced us to write in forms, sonnets, villanelles, tanka, haiku, ballads, iambic tetrameter and pentameter, and so on, much to our displeasure at the time, I might add. And he forcefully linked the past to the present. When he talked about Ginsberg, he talked about the influence of Blake and Whitman. When he talked about Pound, he talked about the

influence of the French Troubadours of the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. He understood that we needed to learn to use the traditional tools of poetry if we were going to shape our own poetic futures.

In fact, there has never been any elitism in Ron's championing of poets and poetry. He is as at home with craft poets in the state poetry organizations as he is with old Beat poets as he is with young slam poets or cowboy poets or academic poets. For Ron, there are only two types of poetry, good and bad. He demanded good poetry of himself and he demanded it of us, his students. And though he was clearly our mentor, those demands put us on the same level with him, as poets talking to each other, learning from each other.

Ron taught us that poetry is humankind's conversation with itself, encompassing perpetuity, one long conversation stretching back into the darkness of the past and forward into the darkness of the future, but always illuminating the present. He taught us that there is no higher calling, nor reward, than to be a part of that conversation. He taught me and countless others how to be a poet.

For that, for all of us, I thank him with these fitting words from his favorite poet, Ezra Pound: "What thou lovest well remains, the rest is dross/What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee..."

*Todd S. Davis*

Todd Davis (SA '71) writes sonnets and essays in Asheville, NC.



Ron Bayes with Robert Creeley. One of the foremost writers associated with Black Mountain College, Creeley was among the many prominent writers Bayes brought to St. Andrews over the years as visiting professors, writers-in-residence, or readers in the Fortner Writers Forum.



## POEM ON HIS NAME

*for Ron Bayes*

Reykjavík's no Umapine, nor inspiring  
Of sprawling tetralogy. Who from Oregon anyway  
Navigates south to the Sandhills' own dusty sprawl  
And lands feet first on Homer Street (his own middle name!)  
    one with a  
Long-lived feline named Ezra, one who records how the soul's  
    time passes,  
Daily, daily. And into the night. A Gremlin in the driveway.

How many poems? O

Beast in View, only a Casketmaker could write a Fram, or  
A History of the Turtle.  
Yes to the Dust, the Desire and the making anew  
Every page, every word, every ringing  
Sound rising reckless in the air.

*Ford Betty Ford*

Ford Betty Ford is the pen name of Ellen Thompson, who studied philosophy at St. Andrews and at Brunnenburg in Italy. She is a native of Atlanta, where she lives with her daughter and dog.

I MET RON in the 80's when I was hired by the Scotland Arts Council as executive director. He was on the Board of Directors. We became friends, and he became part of my family, enjoying Christmas Day and Easter Sunday dinners with my extended family.

He has been instrumental in my writing and my love of poetry. He facilitated workshops for the community, and I was in awe of his ability to find value in everyone's writings. I learned this from him and would later use it when I became a teacher in public school. Presently, I still use some of his techniques in my psychology class at the University of West Georgia.

My dissertation includes an account of my relationship with poetry, and Ron is a major player in cultivating that relationship. This will be acknowledged in the Acknowledgments section. His acknowledging me as a poet with the presentation of the Fortner's Writer in Community Award is one of the recognitions that I value.

*Martha D. Gibson*

Martha Gibson, a doctoral candidate in psychology at the University of West Georgia, is a poet and an award-winning educator. She is the recipient of the Ethel Fortner Writer in Community award, and for 16 years served as the executive director of Scotland Arts Council. Currently a psychology instructor at West Georgia, she also presents poetry writing workshops, *Writing Poetry: Making Connections*, which focus on poetry as a psychological process of embodiment and transformation.

# Haiku 俳句

## Nascence

Some words open doors

Coming light comforts wonder

Dark doubt wants back in

franz j grebner

for Ron Bayes

After 13 years in Boston and six weeks in Paris,  
Franz Grebner returned to the center of North  
Carolina and there still remains.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH RON BAYES

The following is excerpted from an interview conducted by Kemp Gregory for *SIMPLE VOWS*, Issue III, Winter 2001-2002.

*KG: Ron, how did you end up at St. Andrews? And did you have plans all along to make a big difference in the writing community, or did things happen to you as you went with the flow of writing, teaching, and promoting the arts?*

RB: I had been teaching at Eastern Oregon State College for some seven years—with an interim year teaching with The University of Maryland Division out of Tokyo—when I received an invitation to interview for Writer-in-Residence at SA. I had been invited to come back to the Maryland program, too. It was a touchy decision, for I loved Oregon and Japan. Still, the idea of concentrating on building a writing program as my primary charge was exciting. I'd never been south of D.C., and I'd read so much Caldwell and Faulkner that I wasn't sure if I should go for the interview, but decided to because of the challenge of it all. I thought there was scant chance I'd be hired, even after the interview. What a faculty! I was tongue-tied often. One of my interviewers, for instance, had studied under both Sartre and Camus!

But I was hired! Maybe there are no accidents. My painter friend Marvin Saltzman, with whom I taught at EOC for half a dozen years, and his wife and family moved to UNC-Chapel Hill, and they ended up neighbors of W.D. White, who happened to be chair of English at SA, on leave and simultaneously searching for a writer-in-residence for St. Andrews. The rest is history.

Happily, Carolyn Kizer came to North Carolina soon thereafter, and Sam Ragan, later to become the state's first Secretary of Cultural Affairs, bought *The Pilot* newspaper, 30 miles north of SA. The two were to provide infinite poetic, fictionist, and critical contacts for our Writers Forum, which bear fruit to this day.

# ST. ANDREWS REVIEW

FALL-WINTER

Ezra Pound  
James Laughlin  
Kobo Abe  
Harry Meacham  
Forrest Read  
Guy Davenport  
Kenneth Hanson  
Carolyn Kizer  
Craig Smith  
Arthur Pfister  
Kemp Gregory  
William Stafford  
Akiko Miyake  
Lewis Leary  
Leah A. Strong  
John Priest



VOLUME 1 — NUMBER 1 — 1970 — \$2.00

*KG: How did the St. Andrews Review originate?*

RB: *St. Andrews Review* was an idea set forward by my initial boss in the Humanities Division, W.D. White; history professor Charles Joyner; religion professor Mac Doubles; philosophy professor Richard Prust; and politics professor Neal Bushoven, along with the college's business manager,

J. Bruce Frye, and academic dean, Robert F. Davidson. They offered me a commission to start a literary magazine. I accepted on the basis that I would/could focus the first four issues on dynamic personalities often overlooked or misrepresented. After that, the editorial aim would be a broader balance between the known and the unknown in the writing community. Issues #1, Ezra Pound; #2, Buckminster Fuller; #3, Carolyn Kizer; and #4, Yukio Mishima.

We nearly died many a time for lack of funds, but through the good fortune of state and government grants and the outstanding largesse of Sam Ragan, Frank Hanes, Grace Gibson, Nancy Bradberry, Marie Gilbert, and Chip Carmical, to name a few, we were able to maintain.

In January 1976, when we were again on the brink, we held a benefit reading at the Gotham Book Mart in New York. Judith Johnson, Carolyn Kizer, and Tom Patterson put the occasion together. Fellow editor Mac Doubles and I trained up in a blizzard. Fine crowd, despite the weather. John Cage, Richard Howard, Edmund Keeley, Fielding Dawson, Judy, and Carolyn read, and Mark Smith's work was displayed in the gallery. We got decent coverage in *The Village Voice* and a nice 18-inch story in *The Times*—and the lease on life that we needed.

By the time we were approaching issue #40 and our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, we were aware that our small staff and limited resources could not sustain both the magazine and St. Andrews Press. A few years before, SA began an adjunct operation on the Sandhills Community College campus in Southern Pines, where we still offer degrees including the B.F.A. in Creative Writing. Steve Smith, who often teaches night classes there, was chair of communication at SCC. He like the idea of moving *The St. Andrews Review* there, as did his president. And so it was. Until issue #50 it remained *The Sandhills/St. Andrews Review*. Now it's *The Sandhills Review*. Here, Pete Bulgar is press director, and we've published over 120 books in all, some 80 of which are still in print. Pete has expanded the office to accommodate more interns (more computers and design materials), and it's going at a sprightly pace.

*KG: Tell me about your study of Ezra Pound and about some of the other poets you have known, worked with, written about and/or published. For example, Creeley, Olson, William Carlos Williams, Kizer, Jonathan Williams.*

RB: I'm an enthusiast rather than a scholar of Pound. In my freshman year of college, I checked out the then-new *Piwan Cantos*. My favorite English professor warned me away from the book but I opened it and saw, "The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders . . ." That was the beginning of a lifelong personal study. It welded what I felt and believed.

I later headed off to do a summer of graduate study at Colorado State University, particularly to study Shakespeare with Leslie Lindou. Lindou introduced me to Rolfe Humphries, who taught there summers. What a break! We became friends and kept in touch the rest of Rolfe's life. I consider him my first mentor. Rolfe admired Pound greatly. Himself a poet and Latinist, Rolfe was uniquely qualified to assess Pound and his work. I recall that he told me EP had especially liked a line in a review he did of some of the *Cantos* (probably the *Piwan*). "Whatever else he has done, Ezra Pound has never betrayed The Republic of Letters."

Time passed: two years with the infantry, largely in Iceland, and then a year teaching with University College of the University of Maryland, a year of doctoral work at Penn, and back to Oregon to teach; then back to Colorado to study, mentionable only because I took up where I left off. Les was dying of cancer, but I worked largely with the American literary scholar and fictionist Tom Burnam, who respected Pound's work and got the wild idea of trying to popularize Pound's work via reader's theatre—against the strident stream of often-vicious anti-Poundian rhetoric (among other things). I made very bold to write to James Laughlin to ask permission to try, not really expecting a reply. One came by return mail. He liked the idea and said to go ahead. Freaked as to what to do, but joyous, I went to Burnam and told him the deal and said that with the time crunch I'd probably better drop his Emerson and Thoreau seminar rather than see my A-minus

take a real bath. He said, "Great opportunity, Ron. Write your *Evening with Ezra Pound* instead of coming to class. We both know Pound knew his E and T., so turn your script in for your project."

So it was done. Laughlin liked it, said he bought his first tape recorder to hear the first performance, a faculty job on my campus. Shared it with WCW's widow, Flossie, who said she'd like me to do one on Williams, and I gave it a whirl.

Laughlin wanted to have it used as the memorial program for Ezra at the Corcoran after Pound's death, but he was overruled by the extant power structure. I was proud to have him sitting behind me during that ceremony, leaning over and grumbling a few times, "Ron, they should have used your god-damned script!"

St. Andrews is so fortunate to have a fall semester at Brunnenburg, Italy—"Ezra's castle"—and that all began with Laughlin. He introduced me to Pound's daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz, at that Corcoran service. We kept in touch. Later, Mary made the first of many visits to SA to talk about her father's work, and her son, Sizzo (Siegfried), came down to talk about Pound and the Japanese Noh—prior to his coming to teach a whole semester. That so-generous family, in the course of things, has welcomed us to study there, and both Mary and Sizzo teach in the program and are adjunct professors of literature on SA's faculty. Dick Prust was the very first SA professor to take a group over there, in the early 1970s. That alumni list for SA looms large by now.

As to the others you ask about, first: William Carlos Williams: I never met him, but he wrote me after I sent him my first little book—such a nice note, in fact, and he OK'ed its use as the intro to the paperback edition when that came out. (*See back cover of this Festschrift.*) I sent, as young poets are wont to do, copies of that book to WCW, Pound, Tennessee Williams I remember. Eliot and e.e. cummings. Williams was the only one to answer. It still moves me to think of it. Decades later Tim Redmond, who cataloged Ezra's personal library at Brunnenburg, told me Ezra had kept his, which surprised and delighted me.

William Stafford, in a sense, gave me my first big break—



urging an anthology editor to look at my work. Always a good and most encouraging friend—as so many others on the Northwest scene—Vi Gale of Prescott Street Press has always been a role model of publisher, poet, loyal friend.

Philip Whalen got me to attend a Black Mountain reunion (*Ed: See “A Conversation with Ron Bayes.”*) I met Carolyn Kizer in Oregon just before she came to D.C., and thence to North Carolina. Jonathan Williams was a good friend through his visits to the West years before. Now a citizen of his home state, I continue to delight in his genius and his friendship.

*KG: Over the years, what kinds of influences have meant the most to you and your poetry?*

RB: Growing up on a farm—pretty isolated, raised as an only child by maternal grandparents, my mother having died in childbirth—has to come first. Books and stories came along, music I loved, music I hated. Watching and imagining. All part of the first category, I suppose. Seven in my high school class, 40 in the high school, the grade school exactly twice as large. Individuals. Respecting them. Liking them, kooky or dull, imaginative or plodding. And imagination creating dramas and dreams.

Appreciation for food and shelter, for the coming of electricity and plumbing. Anybody who thinks *Our Town* is dumb or simple is convicting themselves of the same, I think.

Reading? Poe. Shakespeare, Emerson, Frost. Bryant. Then earthquake time: the discovery of Eliot at about 18, then the aftershocks of Pound. Later on? Watershed time: Cavafy, Rilke, Lorca. Later still, meeting Laughlin, Merrill, Mishima, Keene, Richie. The discovery of John Clare and Sidney Keyes are important, too.

Oregon, the military years in Iceland, subsequent times in Iceland, Greenland, Bermuda, Puerto Rico, and Japan have all been important. Now—after 30-plus years here—I am delighted to be drawing heavily on North Carolina. I do not find this delay strange, for I still find myself afraid to go mining in pre-teen childhood years. But I sense that near.

## NOT THE PERSON, BUT THE WORK:

### THE POETIC CORPUS OF RON BAYES

#### I.

One part of the force that has been Ron Bayes can be stated rather simply. To illustrate this point, I will use a rather humiliating poem that I wrote 40 years ago in my first class with Ron. I had turned the poem in as a regular assignment. I no longer have an entire copy of this aborted poem, and I remember only parts of its first and concluding lines. I can't recall if the first line was a complete sentence or not, but what I remember is these words: "the cotton candy clouds." Immediately to the left, Bayes just used one word written in red: "trite." Of course the average professor would have taken this as a delightful opportunity to write two scathing paragraphs showing me that I was not, nor ever would be, a competent writer of verse. Instead, I just considered it an error and moved on.

Perhaps I did not save the poem because of the potentially even more horrendous middle section, but for our purposes, that does not matter. At the very end of the poem, words spread out all over the place, there was a two-line phrase that Bayes circled, and then he said "I would omit the above few lines. You have, I think, a perfect poem right here." He wrote "goodbyes are wind-tossed postscripts scattered among trees." I was actually astonished after reading it. Somehow, it wasn't mine, but in a more important sense, it was, and he had shown me what I did not even know about myself – that I could write excellent short pieces when I paid attention to cadence and diction. *That* is the Ron Bayes that nurtured me for an entire year as I composed my first manuscript.

#### II.

My original topic was to have been "Bayes as lyric poet." Alas,

in this limited time, all I can do is repeat what comes to mind from 40 years ago when I first read the poem "Shrine," the first piece of Ron's I had ever perused. In a way, that poem has stood for me as a gnomon for the rest of Ron's work. Especially in his lyric work, the themes of departure and loss – and the concomitant sadness – are everywhere. "Shrine," in narrative terms, is the quasi-narrative of one of these electrifying encounters with love that within 24 hours ends with the lover walking out, eyes glazed, into the streets of Tokyo. The persona of the poem, which we can rather readily assume to be Ron himself, enters the Shinto shrine that the lovers have frequented for days. He walks to the center of the church and thinks to himself "there's nothing for it." He then claps his hands softly, and the poem concludes. The poem has another section, but this section has never ceased to bring me to tears. What else can you say but "there's nothing for it," meaning life itself, with all its sorrows and joys? Over the years I have quoted that line to myself hundreds of times. It stays with me as firmly as does Robert Frost's "Acquainted with the Night," or "Desert Places." This very humble analysis may not be convincing to some, but that does not matter. I'm sure I'm not the only person in whose memory "Shrine" is etched. And believe me, as Ron's editor, I can say there are dozens more like this one in his corpus.

I do hope this brief essay, if nothing else, has given lovers of Ron and his work pause; at the very least, I hope it will send them back to the work itself and to a close consideration of some of the most beautiful poems written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Kemp Gregory*

Kemp Gregory, a native of North Carolina, graduated from St. Andrews College, where he studied creative writing with Ron Bayes, and Duke University, where he earned a master's degree in the philosophy of religion. He has published six books and chapbooks, and for eight years edited the literary journal *Simple Vows*, the last two issues in collaboration with Bayes.

## FOR RON BAYES, REMEMBERING HEART SURGERY

*On being refused entrance into the Dead Poets Society*

Do you ever in the mirror glimpse the whitening scar  
and feel your breath catch at the memory  
of waking cold in the recovery room,  
bundled in blankets and unsure of where you are  
and then, remembering, feel fear  
clutch at your mended heart?  
No leaking valves askew now,  
no aneurysm, thin as bubble gum, ballooning  
where the artery arises thickened from the heart.

First an eyelid moved and finally a toe,  
panic towering like nightmare as you realized  
you were not really breathing on your own.  
Then morphine and more morphine  
and a great thirst waking you,  
a woman hissing "Breathe, breathe.  
Don't die on my shift, damn you, sweetie! Breathe."

When you achieved a simple mask for oxygen and  
learned to fly,  
they doled out ice cubes, one by one, like diamonds.  
Tubes bound you to this world, prevented rising  
like a helium balloon beyond the ceiling,  
beyond the pain to the far side of that dull bludgeoning  
that is the usual state of things.

They tell me I turned green, day after day  
deep pools of shadow deepening under the eyes.  
On the beeping monitor above the bed  
symbolic heartbeats darted like dragonflies.  
Finally they shocked me out of it,

hand-sized electrodes leaving in their stead  
hand-sized patches like a bad sunburn.  
The rest is history.

Do you ever ask yourself when you can't sleep  
for the greenish glow of fireflies in the sultry dark  
and the almost inaudible click of the closing valve  
mercifully muffled by the cats' soft snoring at your feet,  
"Now what do I do for an encore?"

*Kathryn Bright Gurkin*

Kathryn Bright Gurkin is the author of four books of poetry and a collection of essays, *Zen Ironing*. She has won numerous prizes and awards, including the Brockman Book Award for her collection, *Terra Amata*, and was a 1990 Pulitzer poetry nominee for *Stainless Steel Soprano*, both published by St. Andrews Press and edited by Ron Bayes.

# FOR RON

EARLY ON, in *Guiwes*, Ron Bayes wrote:

And Danny said,  
"The light is red, so we'd  
better run."

And close after:

And J. Patton ended his reading and  
turned to the audience said flatly  
"If you want to know about death and  
night and blood, ask Ron Bayes."

There was a spell of Ron [running?] with the world, crossing  
many [nations?]. He and the Sixties seem to have run through  
each other and joined in the new dreams and furies. He seems  
to have felt the lights and mists and mingling loves, some lost  
but hovering. Eventually coming to a later home to stimulate  
the poet-strivers and pen-searchers at St .Andrews  
Presbyterian College in Laurinburg. He made new writers and  
writings there. And his works led to high honors from the  
state of North Carolina.

From his own [Days?] in the Four Phases:

"Under the piles, under the welded  
past we move.  
Spirit or fact or hope  
imagined or known  
leads us.  
We know our sinews stronger.  
The road's ahead."

(and no longer real?)

Some poets thrash and shred  
and feel elation.

Ron has roamed a wide rim  
and seen and felt the lilts and  
many surges.  
He says them well.

As for me, now 91,  
I no longer know whether  
I am beyond the pale,  
or in the pale beyond.

*Frank Borden Hanes*

Frank Hanes has many academic honors and published books. An elder statesman of words in North Carolina, he keeps one foot in history, gathering information for a Winston museum, and one in poetry, to the delight of his readers. An admirer of St Andrews Press, he considers days working with Ron as some of his best, good times.



A BUSH PIG is groomed to party. He grunts softly, rustling over lunch, then murmurs a rich, deep growl when displeased.  
*Potamochoerus porcus*, a popular addition to any wild occasion.

*Robin Hanes*

Robin Hanes has managed to pull together art shows of her work over the years, including one at St Andrews College, with her dad reading poetry. She lives practically downtown Charlottesville, but is able to walk her dog Jasper along the Rivanna daily, emulating her dad's peripatetics.

## TARGET

*why cling to the geography of love?*

--Ron Bayes (*Not As A Foolish Man*)

Tender of poets and wounds,  
tenderer of words,  
we've trained our sights by you,  
lenses you've ground true.

The pupil loves your wily lesson  
like the magpie loves shook foil.  
The iris loves your profligate  
squander of light.

You taught us:  
ecstasy is a dark arrow  
that hits bone.  
You dared us to stare;  
to sing of it  
unblinkingly.

*Nancy A. Henry*

to Ron with love

Nancy A. Henry was a student of Ron Bayes at SAPC (class of 1982). An attorney by education, she is the author of three collections of poetry and teaches college humanities in Maine.



## INTRODUCTION to *FRAM*

WITH THE PUBLICATION of *Fram*, Ronald Bayes brings to completion the *Umapine Tetralogy*, his major work-in-progress since 1963. A big work, it invites comparison with other extended poems of the age. It shares a debt to the tradition of such works as Pound's *Cantos* and Olson's *Maximus Poems*. Like Bunting's *Brigantines*, it is carefully aimed at the auditory nerves. Occasionally, it is peculiarly modern American; at times, almost resembling Dorn's *Gunslinger*. But in the end, it is like none of these, for Bayes is unique.

To begin with, the poems in the tetralogy explore the archaeology of the mind. Bayes patiently digs and sifts among fragments – a snatch of conversation, an epithet snarled in the wind, a newspaper clipping, a postcard. These curious shards appear next to one another, and we are left to fill in the gaps. The poems do not lend themselves to easy explanation. They have the brittle beauty of the fragment. They speak not of wholeness, but of discretion, i.e., the meaning lies in the juxtaposition, the continuing discreteness of the pieces.

The very title *Fram* is a mysterious fragment. Is it the name of the oil filter? Or a foreign word? Or is the word *frame* missing the last letter? Or is it an anagram? *Farm* perhaps? Or is it simply there for the sound? For Bayes is skilled at twisting words to make them come alive again, to make them sound new. *Fram*, like the other books of the tetralogy, abounds in puns.

These poems appeal to the ear and mind. They also sharpen the eye, for Bayes is a master of the image. Like Pound, his poetry is not easily memorized. (Olga Rudge complained to the *New York Times* shortly before Pound's death that they were besieged by young admirers of the poet, none of whom she would admit to the apartment until they recited at least one line of Pound's poetry. Few could.) But, like Pound, his poetry is full of memorable images. What oft was *seen*, but ne'er so well *impressed* . . .

The poet is no longer the thinker who speaks, he is now the seer who impresses his vision on the imagination of the reader or hearer. The ability to craft such remarkable images is a rare one. One thinks of the metaphor of the cut gem reflecting light in *King of August*, a continually appropriate metaphor for the poetry of Ronald Bayes.

It is his sense of image which makes Bayes so modern. Although he may be loathe to admit it, he bears an affinity with Robert Rauschenberg in his juxtaposition of the familiar with the exotic, the sublime with the vulgar. Unlike Rauschenberg, however, his images cut us deeply; they remind us of the violence of human life, the scarring pain of human love.

*Fram* is a tough, honest, rare work. It is a brilliant end to the tetralogy, but it stands on its own – *a miracle of rare device*.

#### *F. Whitney Jones*

Whitney Jones is principal project director of Whitney Jones, Inc., a philanthropic consulting firm in Winston-Salem, NC. He studied at the University of Paris and graduated from Hamilton College with a B.A. in English. He received his Ph.D. in English from UNC-Chapel Hill, where he also served on the faculty. He taught at St. Andrews before entering the field of fundraising in 1977.



**RONALD H. BAYES**

Tom Patterson: Cover of *Fram*,  
Pynyon Press, 1979

## THE UNLIKELY TARHEEL

RON BAYES has been my friend for more than 40 years. I first met him in the spring of 1968. He was interviewing for a position as poet-in-residence at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, where I was in my second year teaching history. I was invited to a party following the formal interviews of the day, since the English Department knew I had double-majored in history and literature as an undergraduate and had written my Ph.D. dissertation in history on a writer, John Dos Passos.

The candidate was about my age, well-read, well-traveled, well-mannered, well-tailored, and slightly balding. I doubted that he would make the grade with the scruffy students in search of "relevance" in St. Andrews' innovative interdisciplinary curriculum.

If anyone had asked me, I probably would not have recommended his hiring. But W.D. White, chairman of the English Department, was unaware of my silent misgivings and offered Ron the job. Dub would later recall his recruiting Ron as "the one thing I count as my gift to St. Andrews." And I would heartily agree.

Ron was an extraordinary teacher. He turned students who could not write a coherent paragraph in my history classes into published poets. I always thought his secret "method" was that he would not grade their work. If they could get their work published they would get an A. If not they would get an Incomplete until they found a publisher. In any event his students came to understand that writing is a way of learning. It offers the opportunity to revise and express one's thoughts more clearly than the spoken word—or the unwritten word—allows. And they also learned that writing and thinking more clearly afford a pleasure not to be experienced any other way.

Ron considered himself "a literary midwife," who assisted each of his aspiring writers to deliver a living, breathing organism. Soon his students were publishing poetry



Charles Joyner, Ron Bayes, and Carolyn Kizer.

all over the place, writing poetry in his class and out. They even began to write wonderful essays in my history classes.

Ron's mentorship extended beyond his own students. I had occasionally committed poetry myself, when I felt the need to say something that violated the canons of my chosen craft. Clio can be a volatile muse, especially when vexed by her envy of Erato. I had been inspired by poetry since high school; but my own murky efforts had no such inspirational effect on anyone else. Ron was an encouraging critic, sternly admonishing what he called my tendency "to leave the meter running." while warmly approving what he called my "tightrope balance between Oscar's wildness and Noel's cowardice."

The Oregonian made himself at home in Laurinburg, North Carolina, and soon had a wide circle of friends bridging

academia's familiar gaps between students and faculty, faculty and administration, and town and gown. His legendary parties were notable for their astonishing blend of people and potables. Out of that mix he orchestrated the founding and the funding of the *St. Andrews Review*. He convinced several of us from the campus and the community that a "little magazine" could successfully publish such eminent writers as William Stafford and Caroline Kizer alongside emerging young poets and in the process reflect well on St. Andrews Presbyterian College. I have since learned that such "little magazines" rarely outlive their first editor. Under his founding editorship the *St. Andrews Review* achieved national prominence. After two years, he named me its second editor. The *Review* not only survived my editorship, it continued to exist for two more decades.

Ron Bayes next instituted the weekly Writer's Forum that brought prominent poets from his international circle of friends to our students and the local community. Every Thursday night for the next forty years Bayes presided over a "happening" in which such established poets as Fred Chappell, Robert Creeley, and Joel Oppenheimer would read their poems on the same program as an open mike for emerging poets from the St. Andrews student body and the local community.

His next inspiration was the St. Andrews Press, committed to publishing books and chapbooks by established and emerging poets. It soon developed a Scottish Heritage Series as well. Ron not only had me to read in the Writers Forum but also to write a foreword to *The Pocket John Charles McNeill*, one of the St. Andrews Press books.

Ron Bayes himself published more books of poetry than I have fingers and toes, plus dozens of uncollected poems, short stories, plays, and reviews. They brought him acclaim from many quarters. He won the state's most prestigious prize, The North Carolina Award. The North Carolina Writers' Network presented him its first Lifetime Achievement Award,

and then named the award in his honor. His recognition—from the local to the international-- is perhaps best symbolized in the well-earned honorary doctorates he was awarded by the Università Delle Arti in Termi, Italy, and by St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina, the institution he has served so long and so well.

*Charles Joyner*

Charles Joyner is Burroughs Distinguished Professor of Southern History Emeritus at Coastal Carolina University. His books include *Down by the Riverside*, and he has been a visiting professor at the University of California Berkeley, the University of Mississippi, and Australia's University of Sydney, as well as professor of history at St. Andrews. He is a past president of the Southern Historical Association.

LET'S SEE: RON BAYES! I met the dude sometime in the Middle Ages, circa 1966. He was from Oregon, and I wanted to know what-in-hell he was doing in the scorched earth of south central Piedmont in North Carolina. (I also asked myself that question any number of times.) So I asked him, and got a one-word answer:

Opportunity.

Well, folks, we have our answers. Nearly 50 years of answers.

Opportunity to teach and prod we very-lucky members of his classes into figuring out how to think critically;

Opportunity to influence young hearts and minds about the nature and sanctity of poetry and the written word;

Opportunity to celebrate and understand the power and influence of words on the courses of human nature.

On a more personal note, Ron, myself, and several others got drunk one night, and I decided to recite Henry V's St. Crispin Day speech just before the Battle of Agincourt ... from memory. Well, Ron had to correct me any number of times as I muddled my way through it. You had to be there.

It is a regret that I have lost touch with Ron over the years. But I have one touchstone. Sometime in those Middle Ages, he published a volume of poetry, *The History of the Turtle*. I have it still, and spend nice moments with it from time to time.

Ron Bayes is a man of means, and I am lucky to have crossed paths with him. And so are thousands of others.

God bless Ron.

*Joe Junod*

Joe Junod is a 1969 English graduate of St. Andrews. Bronx native. Retired journalist and media executive. Married. Three sons. Six grandchildren. One great-grandchild. Writing two books: a novel, and a remembrance of the people, the places, and the lessons learned I've encountered over the decades. Anyone know a good literary agent?

## POME ABOUT GIBSON

When I say “goo”  
drop lemonade in your shoe.

Containerized freight  
Hearse whistle (or is it a horn?) at 4 a.m.  
announcing its own  
arrival.

Unless I lock all the doors my landlord  
walks in without knocking.

Unmailed postcard on the front hall table  
—Having lousy time  
wish you were here—

I lean over and whisper in my ear  
YOU'RE INSANE GODDAMIT  
YOU'RE INSANE

the  
tedium is the message.

### *E. Waverly Land*

Waverly Land, another original member of Ron Bayes's first creative writing class at St. Andrews, has worked for a variety of federal agencies—the Peace Corps, among them—and for a U.S. Senator. A former editor of the *St. Andrews Review*, his poetry books include *Painful Entry*, *Carte Postale*, and *It Moves from Arm to Arm*, which was illustrated by and dedicated to the late Jeffrey Alheim, a fellow St. Andrews student.



WHEN YOU WALK INTO Too Many Books, a popular used book store in Roanoke, Virginia, you will see a large poster of something called Malone's New Literary Map of North Carolina. It is a multicolored, eye-catching map that identifies significant literary figures of different stripes from the various counties in the state. There's Thomas Wolfe over in Buncombe County, near Asheville. Carson McCullers is in Cumberland County, not far from Fayetteville. Cecil B. DeMille is in Beaufort County. Romulus Linney, father of actress Laura Linney and a noted novelist and playwright, is up in Watauga County, near Boone.

The names go on and on, of course, in a state with such a strong literary tradition. But way down in Scotland County, you will see the name, "Ronald H. Bayes, Poet" – like our beloved St. Andrews, a veritable literary oasis in the Sahara of the Sandhills.

"Poet," of course, hardly scratches the surface of Ron Bayes, though he would proudly use that label. But he has accomplished so much more, giving the college one of its most enduring identities. When you think of St. Andrews, you think of writing. Ron founded the St. Andrews College Press, the St. Andrews Creative Writing Program, and the *St. Andrews Review*, and he established the Ethel Fortner Writer and Community Award, just to name a few of his accomplishments. He introduced us to Pound, Mishima, Creeley, Black Mountain, and so much more. All the while, writing came to symbolize what was best about the St. Andrews experience.

But for those of us fortunate enough to have taken his creative writing classes, there is no question that Ron's greatest gift has been as teacher. It was there, both in class and in one-on-one sessions, that he could best share his passion, his art, his craft. As he did so, you found yourself falling in love with language, reading and listening like never before, always searching for that well-turned phrase. Ron helped you find your own particular voice, and celebrated it with you, as he would have

Faulkner's or Hemingway's. Yet he never misled you, never exaggerated who you were or the level of your talents. His guidance and encouragement simply left you with a personal satisfaction that, yes, you were a writer, and with a hunger to continue that growth.

I have had many fine teachers during my decades, but, with apologies to the rest, Ron Bayes was far and away the best and most influential. When I write even a letter or an email, he is there. When I read any book or article, he is there. When I listen to a poet or watch a play, he is there.

"Ronald H. Bayes, Teacher." I can think of no greater compliment.

*Eric Lawson*

Eric Lawson (SA Class of 1974) is a library media specialist at Franklin County High School, in Rocky Mount, Virginia, continuing his involvement with the written word. He lives happily with his wife of 30 years, Diane, in Roanoke.

## THE FINE ART OF RESISTANCE:

An Essay in Honor of Ron Bayes

The authors and the books that have...become part of the answer to our curiosity when our curiosity had the freshness of youth...exist for us, with the lapse of time, as the substance itself of knowledge: they have been intellectually so swallowed, digested, and assimilated that we take [them] for granted, cease to be aware of them because they have passed out of sight. But they have passed out of sight simply by having passed into our lives.

—Henry James, *Honore de Balzac*

OUT OF ALL the “authors and books” that answered my curiosity when I was young, Ron Bayes and his books remain by far the most influential—as influential for me as Balzac was for Henry James.

To suggest a comparison between myself and Henry James is, of course, absurd: between 1897 and 1904, James published eight novels and two collections of stories; in my entire life I have published a thin smattering of poems and two short plays. And yet, throughout the more than four decades since I met Ron, I have been irrevocably and primarily a writer, regardless of how much I had published at any given moment; regardless of how I happened to be eking out a living.

Every gift is a curse, and vice versa. My parents share some of the credit and the blame for my fate. They exulted in whatever talent I displayed, encouraged, first applied the label to me: writer. But parents aren’t enough: the starlight of infinite possibility dances in their eyes. Someone outside, someone with credentials has to come along and ratify—more than ratify: put you to the test; hold high the bar and make you jump to prove, above all to yourself, that you are serious.

Ron didn’t hold that bar up by himself, of course. It was a whole community—fellow students, friends, other teachers, audiences who sat still and listened. But Ron was the keystone, the exemplar who shows you where to set your foot,

the man who directs his gaze upon you in the crowded room as if to say to all the others, "Now, attend." And the room would grow silent with respectful anticipation.

"Swallowed, digested, and assimilated...." Sure. Ron's peers and predecessors—Pound, Williams, Olson, Creeley, Duncan, Mishima, Kizer, Dorn, Snyder—how many more!—wove themselves into the fabric of my life as if by magic, from thence to shape my thoughts and my aesthetic, my sense of fun, in a thousand different ways, unnoticed, taken for granted. But Ron himself and his writings never "passed out of sight" for me in the way Henry James describes.

I think I know why. Ron is as capable of transparency in his work as you could wish; look at "Four-Year-Old" from *The Casketmaker* for one of thousands of instances:

Teddy bear  
and a stick  
behind clump-weed and wild rye  
he charges the evils of  
the world.

But there is another characteristic moment in Ron's work, one that I'm reasonably sure any serious reader of his poetry has come across. Look at fits 1-3 of "Laurinburg Litany," for example:

1.  
Sweet Mabel, Sweet Marmalade,  
brisk bath, everybody towel down and  
count down.

2.  
The body  
stripped of its  
self-accusations,  
an end  
in itself.

So therefore must I  
declare my license  
renewed!

3.  
Troy  
New York

What the hell's going on here? There are lots of things we can say about Ron's use of language here: the intercourse of image and abstraction; the way certain elements (Troy/New York) are brought to our attention through isolation; the way other elements put each other into crazy perspective through puzzling juxtaposition (marmalade, brisk bath); the prevailing impression that a unique and wry sense of humor is playing puppet-master to all these effects. Read to the end of a Bayes poem, a Bayes book, and you emerge saturated in a way of encountering language, the world, the self, that you will find in the work of no other writer.

But Ron's is a way that I, at least, find impossible to reduce to an easily restated "meaning," and these fits from "Laurinburg Litany" demonstrate why. Bayes's work resists communication at least as strongly as it promotes it. The moment arrives in his poems when the images and the connections between words, between thoughts, are as irreducible as so many glittering rubies or diamonds.

I want to suggest that it is precisely this unassimilable quality that keeps Bayes and his work from "passing out of sight" into our lives—certainly into mine. After all these years, I still haven't figured him out, still haven't reduced his work to a pat phrase, a handy summary I can pull out of my hip pocket and dust off whenever the need arises. I'm still challenged and puzzled and bedeviled by his work every time I turn the page.

In a world dedicated to the virtues of clarity, transparency, and ease, this element in Ron's poetry represents precisely the opposite principle: Stop. Look. Recognize opacity. Consider your confusion; own it. Live in the moment, in its mystery. The beauty here is the beauty of resistance to beauty; the question raised is what it means to resist meaning. These are refinements at a level of subtlety that make the traditional tea ceremony with all its filigreed niceties look like

Moe clobbering Curly with a pipe-wrench.

I think I'm talking here about something like Keats's "negative capability," the poet's ability to remain in "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts"—and to produce those same doubts in the reader—in order to allow the poem to emerge organically, from within, rather than as the exposition of an external logic. Ron is not interested in meeting expectations. His work carries that negative capability to the Nth power, to the point where the poet's selection of Troy/New York—rather like Duchamp's selection of a bicycle wheel or a bottle-rack—becomes the object for contemplation, the object, in Keats's formulation, of "beauty."

What is beautiful about it? Precisely its opacity: Troy—all right, a classical allusion; translated to New York—yes, and demeaned in the process—or not? Troy, New York is part of our lives; must we agree that our own existence is necessarily inferior to the lives of Achilles and Company? Once chosen, the object becomes embroiled, forms connections with the other words, images, meanings in the poem. All of these seemingly arbitrary elements set down next to each other combine, interweave, to form a whole that grows more complex with every added syllable, line break, image, quotation.

And yet, each of these elements, like chips of gravel or of diamond, remains itself, saturated with a thousand meanings but, set apart in Bayes's work, somehow resisting their contexts, stubborn, ungainly, exposed, questionable, naked--irreducible. "There was a jar in Tennessee,/And round it was, upon a hill...." Like Stevens's jar, the words and images that Bayes appropriates and juxtaposes take dominion and yet stand aloof, with an overtone of laughter that simultaneously mocks and soothes: this is where we are; this is how we live and cope; pretty incredible, isn't it?

I don't know whether in the long run this characteristic moment, this aesthetic of resistance in Bayes's work, is a recipe for immortality or a road to eternal obscurity. But I do know that it's what keeps me coming back, as Pound said of Eliot, to "READ HIM." And it's what keeps me coming back to Ron's

work, not only as a reader but as that same writing student I have always been, constantly afraid to speak, to violate the page, to take the risk. I am and will always be the writing student who must constantly rediscover the sheer effrontery it takes to continue setting down, as Mishima says, “another word...and another word...and another word.” Ron’s writing gives me that courage: he tells me through his own example, “Stand up! Say it! Don’t be afraid!” That is the greatest gift a mentor can bestow.

*John Lawson*

John Lawson (SA '71) teaches rhetoric and creative and dramatic writing at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.

RON BAYES IS my only child's godfather. There was never any discussion at all about anyone else. It turns out that choice was fortuitous as she graduated from St. Andrews – with Bayes as her mentor –30 years after I did. She is a phenomenal writer, and I think that the environment created and sustained by Bayes for so many years played a huge role in her development. For that I will be eternally grateful.

In remembering my own time with Ron, I realize now how hard he works. That was the example I hardly realized I was absorbing. Ron was always working on something. His own poetry, our poetry, Writer's Forum, relationships between the school and the many writers he urged to become a part of the program – he was never satisfied that he (or we) had done all that could be done. His example is with me every day as I realize that real work never is *really* finished.

Ron really loved us, I think. He created in us a need to be better, to speak more clearly, to develop voices of our own, to live within the word. He was one of the first people I had as a professor at St. Andrews and I was entirely in awe. How would I ever, ever be able to produce any work that was worthy? It turns out it was all worthy. To Ron. I may have thrown most of it away, but he never would. All our work was valuable – maybe not good, but valuable. He taught me that. And that is where, again, the work becomes the defining memory for me. I was willing to work because he was willing to work with me.

I am grateful for all the beautiful times I had with Ron. I was with him in Italy in 1977 and was constantly amazed by his encyclopedic knowledge of Pound. I will never forget the night of an impromptu theater when he commanded Mary de Rachewiltz to "Stand up for my daughter!" (me). I was a little afraid, but Bayes, as usual, carried off the moment with perfect aplomb and much laughter. He made that trip worth more to me than almost anything else I have ever done.

Ron Bayes is a huge part of who I am. He was nurturing and gruff and altogether intimidating and wonderful. He is important enough to me to have asked him to be



godfather to my daughter, Margaret Mason Tate. I was thrilled when she chose St. Andrews because not only would she be with her godfather, but because she would be with a master craftsman who would teach her the value of work.

I love Ron very much – *il miglior fabbro*.

*Yvonne Mason*

Yvonne Mason is a 1978 alumna of St. Andrews with a B.A. in English. "I don't think that there was any year that I did not have a class with Ron Bayes and was lucky enough to go to Bruunenburg with him in 1977. I am honored to have been awarded the Alan Bunn Memorial Chapbook award in 1978. I have since received a Master's degree in English, have published a book of literary criticism on author Clyde Edgerton, and now try to mold the minds of America's youth through teaching English at the high school level."

## TOKYO TABLOIDS

*for RB*

I would like to have known you in your Tokyo tabloid days.

..in humble admiration and imitation,

I went to paint my own pages and fell  
not short in scandals.

Still,

I wanted to prowl with you and Yukio M. through smoky  
rooms and changing winds.

We'll meet there I know, when the tabloid ink runs dry and  
new fingers oil it's old pages anew.

They'll paper our poems across subway floors and push crotch  
through turn-style, toward train door lines,

Trampling our happy corpses.

*Tyler McPeek*

Tyler McPeek graduated from St. Andrews in 1998, with a B.F.A. in Creative Writing and English, and was a Bunn-McClelland Chapbook Award winner and a Brunnenburg participant during his SA tenure. Since graduating, he has completed an M.B.A. in Japan at Ritsumeikan APU and an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Florida, where he is currently a Ph.D. student in the linguistics department.

## RON SONG

Darkness edges the grey day at the swamp's edge.  
The sound of dragonfly wings  
Hovering at the surface sets the muse's mood.  
You, my friend, led me here and here you named the quest.  
  
You, the knight errant of true words, have jousted for life  
Warring mundane and soggy thought. Fields and  
                    soldiers taught  
Well that thought and will disarm the ego and unveil truth.  
  
From this season of the darkest moon of the darkest night,  
Your call is answered by the giant turtle marching  
Towards daybreak. The muse knows you, her truest knight,  
Holds you surely, and asks of all, allegiance to her prize.

*June Milby*

June Milby, who now works for the Federal Children's Health Insurance Program in Baltimore, MD, is a NC poet. Her work has been published in the *St. Andrews Review*, the *Kentucky Review*, and *Corradi*. Her chapbook, *The Jade Frog*, was published by St. Andrews Press.

## FIRST SONG AT ST. ANDREWS

redbud tree  
magenta  
hard-edged  
in the sun

pure magenta  
startles

in the next day's  
grayness  
softer-edged  
more a smudge  
also startling  
the center  
carrying the force

redbud tree  
from any distance  
it is the leaves  
one thinks  
making the blur  
of rich magenta  
against the sky  
against the lake

it cannot be ignored

actually small florets  
ride each branch  
profusely and  
not the leaves

it is actually  
flowers blooming  
in the march air



Ron Bayes and Joel  
Oppenheimer  
(Lynda Smith photo, 1980)

one wants  
a palette loaded  
with magenta

the only time  
in nature  
it is allowed

not to mention real

one wants to sit  
on the stone bench  
squinting  
    holding  
one's brush  
up and out  
just like  
a real artist

one wants  
to use up  
a year's allotment  
of magenta

*Joel Oppenheimer*

New York born Joel Oppenheimer attended Cornell University, the University of Chicago, and Black Mountain College, where he studied with M.C. Richards, Paul Goodman, and Charles Olson. He was a director of the St. Marks Poetry Project in New York, a longtime columnist for *The Village Voice*, and the author of dozens of books of poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction. In the 1980s he was a frequent visitor at St. Andrews College. "A poem," he was fond of saying, "is the answer to a question you did not know you had asked yourself."

## A LETTER TO RON

*November 4, 2010*

Dear Ron,

You appeared in the dream I was having when I woke up this morning before dawn. A steady rain was falling outside my bedroom window, but it was a sunny afternoon in the dream, and there you were, strolling at a leisurely pace alongside a blacktop country road. Sporting a newly grown beard, you wore casual slacks and one of the guayabera shirts you've long favored. I pulled my car off to the roadside and got out. Obviously in good spirits, you greeted me warmly, and as I walked with you back to your house we talked animatedly, about what I can't remember--maybe the results of this week's mid-term elections. (It would've been interesting indeed to get your liberal-Republican take on *that* situation, especially in a dream context.) Arriving at your house we joined a dinner party already in progress, and moments later I found myself saying your name aloud as I woke up in my bed in so-called real time.

Reflecting on that last segment of a much longer dream involving many other people, my mind drifts back to my initial meeting with you in the autumn of 1971, during my first visit to St. Andrews. I was a prospective transfer student and had been accepted at St. Andrews pending the admissions-department interview that brought me there. Noting the interest in literature and creative writing that I'd mentioned in my application documents, the admissions department sent me to a session of your modern poetry class, where I joined you and fifteen to twenty students seated around a configuration of formica-topped tables overlooking a courtyard in the liberal-arts building. My faded memory fails to call up the particular poems and poets under discussion, but I think they were from Donald A. Allen's *New American Poetry* anthology. I also recall the informal, egalitarian spirit of the proceedings, and the fact that the students were on a first-name basis with you. And I was struck by the way you talked about the poets whose work

was being discussed, as if you knew them personally, and as if everyone else in the room was as deeply engaged in the craft of poetry as I soon realized you were. Some of your comments went right by me, but I was impressed by the way you treated us all like insiders.

And insiders we became, or at least some of us. During the following spring semester at St. Andrews I took your creative-writing course, and the experience went a long way toward giving me the confidence that a writing career might actually be a viable possibility, despite the myriad practical considerations seeming to mitigate against it.

Almost 40 years later, lo and behold, here I am, still at it. I didn't become a poet like you (although I still write poetry on occasion) but since the St. Andrews years I have somehow managed to make my way in the world almost exclusively through my writing, as you know. I've made plenty of tradeoffs in order to make it happen, but no regrets. Not a one.

I'm lucky to be able to count two or three other mentors, but you were the first, and you introduced me to the others. You set me on the trajectory and gave me that crucial push, you life-changer.

I've seen you too infrequently in recent years, especially considering the physical proximity of our adopted hometowns. But I do carry your spirit with me wherever I go, and it was a most pleasant surprise to find you ambling bearded and seemingly carefree through my dream this morning.

The experience left me with the realization that I've never properly thanked you. Maybe because I know I literally can't thank you enough. And so, this letter.

As ever, love,  
Tom

Tom Patterson is a freelance journalist, art critic, independent curator, and the author of several books on American visionary art and artists, including *St. EOM in the Land of Pawaquan* and *Howard Finster, Stranger from Another World*. He lives in Winston-Salem, NC, where he writes a bimonthly visual-art column for the local daily newspaper and contributes frequently to the British outsider-art magazine *Raw Vision*.

## FOR RON

SURELY ONE OF THE most important philosophical findings of the last few centuries is the realization that truth cannot be singularly grasped. The truth about something that happened, the truth about how two people relate, the truth about the reasons for the Civil War, the truth about what makes Cezanne great: none of them are exhaustively grasped in a single system of thought or by any one person's take on it. Rather, we triangulate from one another's vantage points to fill out a richer or poorer grasp of the truth about any matter, and we have learned, or most of us have learned, to be modest about claiming too much for our little systems.

There are religious and ideological fundamentalists who insist that they have a corner on the truth, and we all know how unhealthy such people can be to interact with. But there is a more subtle kind of rigidity, one just as constraining, but one that people are likely to view as benign, and that is the lazy conceit most of us grew up with that the conventions we live by assume a conventional grasp of reality which is the proper standard for all truth.

I raise all this with my toast to Ron because I see Ron as having played a vital role in showing people how to break through one-dimensional ways of thinking, not toward some preferred way but toward the realization that truth is faceted, that nobody captures it entirely in one frame or one lens.

Poets have a distinctive way of punching through one-dimensional thinking: they *make* the truth. This is not to say they make up the truth, fabricating it, like Carroll did Wonderland. They may do that, but many of them, Ron included, I believe, see themselves telling truth by making truth. And when a poet in residence invites a college student to make truth that grasps at what conventional discourse cannot bear, a pluralist is soon to be born, someone immune to unidimensional naiveté.

I suspect that most of us can think of some artist (wordsmith, sculptor, playwright, whatever) who helped us see



truth as multi-faceted. For Ron, I know that the modernist poets of the generation before him played that role, Eliot and Yeats along with Pound. For me, it was seeing Fellini's "La Dolce Vita," hearing a recorded Ginsberg read "Howl" and reading a broadside by Paul Goodman. Ron has a hallowed place on that list. Having been his colleague at St. Andrews for about 40 years, living a block from Chez Thorstein on Homer Street, and supping with him on Sundays for decades, he was a constant reminder of the exuberance language can have if you don't overly constrain it with systems. This is an important point for a philosopher to be reminded of.

If you know Ron, you know that it's hard to listen to him for more than 10 seconds without smiling. The daring leaps of logic, the audacious dives into obscurity and unrequited references, the names of people you suspect you are supposed to know but don't, but most of all, his limitless inventiveness in fathoming the facets.

Ron's is a generous heart; it's a trusting heart, too trusting sometimes, like the heart of a saint. It's hard to imagine anyone with a better sense of humor. And both of these characteristics—the heart and the humor—are connected. Someone with a loosely jointed world can make comic leaps better than tightly strung people, and they are also more open to the disclosure of another person on his own terms. Ron's students have always basked in the encouragement of his defenseless, infectious, impish, spontaneous responses to their work. Ron "makes it new" for all of us.

### *Richard Prust*

Dick Prust is retired from teaching philosophy after four decades at St. Andrews College—but not entirely. "I'm teaching one course per term at Duke's continuing education program, living at Carol Woods, a community of creative geezers in Chapel Hill, writing deathless philosophical prose, reading Dostoevsky, making many new friends, and living the good life."

## FOR RON BAYES

Ron, my dear friend, and I  
are slowly falling  
    into silence;  
yet when our common roots will join in T.C.P.  
a ghost will keep on calling  
    his cat: Ezra!

*Mary de Rachewiltz*

Dear Craig,

Perhaps these lines need some explanation, though Ron will catch the point immediately. Many years ago he planned a biography of or a play about Thaddeus Coleman Pound, and I sent him stuff from my grandparents' scrapbook. I am afraid the bio—or play—was never completed, but he did name one of his beloved cats "Ezra." I think we owe the St. Andrews-Brunnenburg connection to Ron Bayes, and you and Lynda were the first "settlers": God bless you all.

*Nothing counts save the quality of the affection*  
(Canto LXXVII)

*MdeR*

Mary de Rachewiltz was for 20 years curator of the Ezra Pound Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University. An award-winning translator, she has published several volumes of her poetry in Italian and English—among them *Whose World* (St. Andrews Press) and the forthcoming *The Tuning Fork* (Palisade Press), translated by Patrizia de Rachewiltz. New Directions published her memoir *Discretions-- Ezra Pound: Father and Teacher*.





Ron Bayes, June Milby, Lorraine Bayes (Ron's half-sister), and Sam Ragan, longtime editor of the *Southern Pines Pilot*.

Ron Bayes's good friend Sam Ragan worked on several newspapers, including the *Raleigh News & Observer*, before purchasing the *Pilot*. Ragan published six collections of verse as well as several works of non-fiction. He may be best known as a widely admired advocate of the arts. He was the first secretary of the NC Department of Cultural Resources (North Carolina was the first state in the nation to create a cabinet-level office of cultural affairs), first chair of the NC Arts Council, helped found the NC School of the Arts and the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities, and in 1982 was named North Carolina Poet Laureate for Life. In 1981, St. Andrews Presbyterian College initiated the Sam Ragan Fine Arts Awards, given annually "In honor of Sam Ragan, North Carolina's first Secretary of Cultural Resources." Ragan was a tireless champion of writing and the arts at St. Andrews.

## A HEART WITH TEETH:

Ron Bayes and the Pumpkin Soup  
That Changed My Life

GRAZIELLA'S PUMPKIN SOUP was the end of my meat-and-potatoes diet. Before my junior year at St. Andrews, vegetables and fruit were as absent in my diet as pork in those adhering to kosher and halal laws.

It was lunchtime at Schloss Brunnenburg. We had just completed our morning's work on the de Rachewiltz farm in the northern Italian village of Dorf Tirol. For doing so, I and the 13 other students I had traveled with from North Carolina were rewarded by a hearty farmhouse midday meal. It was then that I was confronted by the cook's soup, the color of a harvest sunset with hints of creamy white. I, too, was creamy white, but in the face. The fear that had welled up from the stomach that would soon carry the soup was fear greater than that of being five years old and cornered by a rabid German shepherd. Crossing myself, I put spoon to liquid. The soup pooled into the spoon's bowl, and slowly I raised the utensil to my mouth.

Oh, mama! The luscious soup was redolent of earth, of cattle grazing nearby, of the green and stone that commanded it all. That ancients on their wedding nights copulated in farm fields to encourage a bountiful crop made sense to me at 20 because of this humble and motherly cook's offering. It might have been lunchtime, but for my palate it was morning.

It is from that soup that I trace my profession as a food writer. Soon I became hooked on novel (to me, at least) edibles and scribbling what I could about them. It is from that simple course that I was curious about all that I had eschewed for so long. Spinach? Love it. Green beans? I'd eat them nightly. Goat? Tied with pork for the protein par excellence.

It is because of Ron Bayes—my captain and first mentor, the man who challenged me by refusing me entry into Creative Writing 101, instead placing me in an upperclassman's course, the man who introduced me to Ezra Pound and subsequently Brunnenburg—that I was forced to consume the pumpkin soup, or risk offending my hosts.

It is because of Ron that I still write and have a love for words—with teeth.

*José Ralat Maldonado*

José Ralat Maldonado ('SA'98) is a food writer who lives in Dallas, Texas, with his wife and two-year-old son. José is a regular contributor to *Slashfood.com* and to *City of Ate*, the Dallas *Observer's* food blog. He has written for numerous print periodicals, among them *New York Press*, *Cuisine Noir* and the Dallas *Observer*. José has dabbled in medical and academic publishing as well as weekly newspapers, but his first love is food.

## INTRODUCTION: HISTORY OF THE TURTLE, Book III

RONALD BAYES has asked me to write a little introduction to this book, and it goes without saying that I am glad to add any good word to the making of this volume. I do not feel it as a duty. I feel it as an honor, but one not fully merited. I do not consider myself a good critic – as many of our contemporary poets are – and I freely admit that my selection of works included in *El Corno Emplumado* depends upon some intuitive sense (a complicated combination of realities) impossible to explain.

I can and will say this:

Ronald Bayes has taken the bull by the horns in a way few contemporary writers have been able to do. He is working in a very special field. He makes combinations which to some are completely outside the realm of “poetry.” And they are not only the accustomed combinations of prose and poetry known as “prosody.” They go much deeper than that. They have to do with machines and flowers, to depend on symbols perhaps a bit too vague in my conception of his work. There is a totality in what comes out which goes far beyond what may be taken as “beautiful poetry.” Perhaps it is, more rightly, “useful poetry.” For I have a very strong feeling that what Bayes is doing in this book (indeed in the four books which will someday be one) will prove to be a stepping stone to our future – poetically speaking.

I have no idea what Bayes will do next, what these *Turtle* books have meant to him in his poetic evolution nor what they will mean to other poets in theirs. I do not even know what they will mean to readers, in regard to how these poems, this poem, affects their lives. But there are certain things I feel intuitively. I feel that the writing of this work, and the reading of it, will make something new happen in American letters.

*Margaret Randall*  
Mexico City, February 1966



Marvin Saltzman

*Footnote:* Forty-five years later, it is clear what Bayes was doing, and what it has meant to his readers. I reread these words written so long ago and feel a bit of pride that I was able to appreciate the work back then, as well as some embarrassment that I did not fully understand its implications. It is wonderful to know that Bayes has continued to write and that now, on the occasion of his retirement as director of the creative writing program at St. Andrews College in North Carolina, he will have more time to devote to that writing. He has given us a lot; may he continue to give us more!

Albuquerque, New Mexico: November 2010

Margaret Randall, founder of the legendary literary magazine *El Corno Emplumado*, is the author of some 100 books of poetry and non-fiction. While living in Cuba and Central America, her work chronicled the effects of imperialism on nations and peoples. In 1984 she returned home to Albuquerque only to be ordered deported. Five years later she won reinstatement of her citizenship. In 1990 she received the Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett grant for writers victimized by political repression. In 2004 she was the first recipient of PEN New Mexico's Dorothy Doyle Lifetime Achievement Award for Writing and Human Rights Activism.

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF LOVE:

Ron Bayes and the Life of Poetry

DOES ANYONE CARE about the life of the poet? The *death* of the poet: now *there's* a phrase that fits the tongue nicely and that offers a subject worthy of criticism. So Joseph Brodsky, my mentor and friend, observed. As I move into my seventh decade, I begin more and more to raise my hand to answer the first question this way: *I* do. After all, the first phrase comes to take on more resonance than the second, which seems to me a detail, a marker that merely ensures that the elegy, unlike its subjects, will never die.

I am rather interested in lives (few though they be—and even less fit, usually) lived in the light of poetry, lived as if they were themselves poems. Oscar Wilde asserted that he was his own best work, that the quality of his life—his friendships, loves, interests—constituted a *magnum opus* to be put at the head of his works. Indeed, it is one of the interesting features of the literary life that if you construe *corpus* as metaphysical body, the career of the other—social and existential—body becomes its contrasting term. Nor is it unthinkable to turn the telescope the other way around and suggest that the person was the first work of art, the poetry—the made things—arriving to corroborate evidence, as it were, to this fact.

At one end of the spectrum we have Mallarmé, who famously opined that everything existed to wind up in a book. At the other end, we have his contemporary and comparable aesthete, the Divine Oscar, cheerfully inverting Mallarmé and finding that the book—every book—winds up in a life. In other words, the body of work includes the body of the poet. In the standard Western view, corpse gives way to corpus: the latter takes over, a deputized marker for the departed person. But Ron Bayes follows another influential strain of discourse that follows Eastern traditions (by way of Pound, among others) in preferring celebrations of friendship among the living to elegies for the dead. The emphasis is on the lived,



rather than the mourned: presence over absence. In this respect, Bayes' aesthetics coincide with that of his old Northwest friend, poet Carolyn Kizer, who similarly had little truck with the worship of the past, feeling that the elegiac imperative, so prevalent in English poetry, even took on a tinge of necrophilia, if looked at, squintingly, at the end of a hard day.

This west coast aesthetic corrective, in addition to looking beyond what its practitioners understood to be the day-to-day assumptions of the eastern Establishment and its merely made-over Euro-aesthetic, could also claim a salutary entailment in representing a healthier outlook. It was just such an outlook that came to bloom in the San Francisco Renaissance and established a considerable foothold in that artistic, east-coast set-aside, Black Mountain College. Thus Bayes and Kizer, two poets transplanted diagonally from Northwest to Southeast at critical times in their lives, participated in an extension of Emerson's switch from peering through the lens of time to looking through the lens of space. The benefits spoke for themselves. A young(ish) country needed to consider its present, for it had no (or scant) deep past with which to underwrite its national aesthetic project—with exceptions noted for that of non-English-speaking indigenous peoples (a special linguistic case we are just coming to terms with) and the prehistoric, pre-linguistic past—the province of naturalism(s) common to westerners like Gary Snyder and William Stafford (another Oregonian). Hence is it that we wind up with a way for poets who spring from small towns to self-create, inscribing their anonymity on the face of the land and thereby rendering both the land and themselves known and knowable, felt and subject to experience.

In spite of its emphasis on the present and a desire to find there the surprise of the new and fresh (Creeley), the metaphor that we are ourselves a work, toiling in tandem with our productions, is an old one, and I will not rehearse its history here. But I wish to bring this to the forefront because it is certainly germane to the career, at once rich and elusive, of Ron Bayes.

While he has undoubtedly set his imprimatur on the

face of North Carolina poetry through the *St. Andrews Review*, the St. Andrews Press, and *Cairn*, his poetry is as hard to find as its subjects, which are often pins on a map of the less-travelled: Umapine, Laurinburg, Iceland, San Juan, Haiti. Others—Philadelphia, Tokyo, Montreal—need not justify their registry, but they belong to the same personal archipelago of meaning, places that by virtue of their associations as lesser-known locations participate in the same kind of personal mapping, of punctuating vacancy—of space, of meaning.

These places are not simply the lot of any poet in motion across both landscapes and timescapes, for place, in Bayes' economy, also acquires an emotional dimension, a metaphysical perspective, an historical rooting and routing. In the context of Modernist poetics—and context is ever important with a poet as allusive and wide-ranging as Ron Bayes—place suggests locations resonate with more than their pasts. To the first-time reader, some of the places may present only the credentials of their unfamiliarity (Umapine), but the poet plays a trump card that Stevens made famous in "Anecdote of the Jar," namely, the *invention* of significance—literally the placing of a jar, itself resonant as a container, urn, reliquary of valuables, of memorial contents or of general provisions. Around this dual-action invention—one relating to the past (memory), one to the future (providing), the new is mapped, and a net is cast. When one place becomes two, a real map begins to take place, is drawn, and before you know it, a world itself comes into view. As with place, so with time. The places of the imagination show what it was like to be alive on this date, with those memories, these particular acts. They merge into the larger time of history and event, so that the intersection of times in the continuum—not unlike Olson's field of composition—is like the intersection of things in space.

Meaning is a made thing, and the significance of meaning (if you will) is that it not only reaches into two dimensions simultaneously, it also mediates between public and private. Moreover, meaningful speech has the effect of truing public discourse at the same time that it gives private utterance equal footing, so that it doesn't require the sugar-rush of sentimentality or the misplaced application of sincerity to get

underway. If poetry is anything, it is a celebration of the subjective, a way for private discourse to shed its obscurities and join with other language users in mutual communication, which is also, I might as well add, an act of communion.

Bayes is a meaning-maker, tying together disparate locations and persons, anecdotes that time would have otherwise blown away like paper cups, snippets of commercial verbiage as easily as stony riddles, with the zeal of a Talmudic scholar who relishes the lacunae of a sacred text—even one that deprives him of the immediate gratification of received meaning—as surely as the surety of the sacred words actually before his gaze. Take a look at the concluding section of “Not as a Foolish Man”:

But oh the Places I love now. And how I  
would return to you, to you

With the absolute same passions,  
the desires somewhat clearer,  
& the great hopes still, and still  
not as a foolish man.

One of you (colder even than Montreal)  
I feel as a sudden lover to;  
old Reykjavik. Then, quick, hot  
Old San Juan and wild Tokyo.

Why,  
why cling to the geography of love?  
I do not know, Dear Friends—  
or why I'll hang before I quit.

Bayes' method of poetic documentation takes its cue, of course, from the *Cantos*, but also from Olson's *Maximuw*, Dorn's *Gunwlinger*, and, to my ear, the poems of Paul Blackburn. Bayes' lovely sense of how a poem takes up residence on the pages through collages and quotations add the sense—worthy of Picasso, Duchamp, and Cornell—of contemporaneity. They do so without failing to give the sense that incidents, meetings, and events constitute the exterior phenomena of our lives, and oftentimes these verge on a phantasmagoria that is at once

history and fairy tale—which as soon as the word hits the page, it is. The epic *Umapine Tetralogy* is rife with the documentary evidence of its own coming into being, and it feels, in retrospect, a dream of the quick and faithful mind surveying landforms from some perspective high in the air, before plunging into savory—or asinine or humorous—particulars. But as geography, the tetralogy and many, if not most, of Bayes' works take note of where they are in a way that bespeaks the self-exile's desire to seed numerous locations, irrespective of history or reputation, to see what will take root. That is, they seek to take root within the imaginative space of the poem, just as it has presumably already moved beyond intimation in the imagination of the poet.

The Poundian-Stevensian-Emersonian charge (if such can be imagined) to push back the darkness by both shoring ruins and naming places goes, for Bayes, under the name of "the geography of love." By this pesky and careworn term, we should understand what Rorty called "the symbol of ultimate concern," an auspice at all times available to poets, who, while they may share little in terms of tradition (indeed, they may be members of incompatible or warring tribes) nevertheless partake of the craftsman's knowledge that "All human relations untouched by love take place in the dark." Rorty saw love as compatible with his neo-pragmatism, in that love and (his) philosophy were both manifestations of the will to progress. While it is debatable that poetry is progressive, it is certainly beyond debate that love is as much a motive as it is a theme.

Love signals the primacy of the subjective, and "geography of love" indicates a world both refashioned and renewed. It is like proposing an idea that has recognizable cognates: the idea is original by virtue of its singularity, but it comes from pieces that we know (and we know that the poet knows that we know). Bayes' "geography of love" is in another sense his constellation of poems, and yet by specifying geo-graphy, he locates his points of ultimate concern, not in the heavens, but on the surface of the earth. The heavens can take care of themselves, while we must find our way about. Bayes suggests that we *make* it more than we find it, but it is no less to be revered for that. More than any other poet I know, Bayes

gives the uncanny sense of posthumous utterance: he walks among the artifacts of a serviceable everyday world he has imagined and invites us to imagine with him. I am gratified to be among those who have, in some deep and lasting sense, merged their imaginations with his. He is one of those poets whose work enlarges you by getting you to speak in a vocabulary you didn't know you would use until, trying it, you found it to be both fitting and true. He is one of the geographers who has shown us how maps are made, how they overlap, how they trace memories, and propose destinations, all under the sign of the "ultimate concern." It doesn't matter whether it was Philadelphia or Laurinburg; what matters is that one loved it there, in that delicacy of intention that every artist feels and that Bayes brings to the point of exquisite revelation. Bishop, a poet of quite a different temperament than Bayes, had it right when she wrote, "More delicate than the historians' are the map-makers' colors."

*David Rigsbee*

David Rigsbee is the author of two recent books — *The Red Tower: New and Selected Poems* and *The Pilot House*, as well 18 previous books and chapbooks, including critical works on Carolyn Kizer and Joseph Brodsky. He is the coeditor of *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Southern Poetry*. From 1986-87 he directed the St. Andrews Press.

SOMETIMES, A NUDGE is all it takes to redirect a life. Ron gave me one of those nudges.

It was 1974. I had written a short story for his Creative Writing class. Mercifully today, my mind has blocked the story out, which means that it wasn't going to win any Hemingway short story competition. No matter. Bayes read it, praised it and suggested two literary magazines that he said should be proud to publish it.

In retrospect, I suspect that Ron told each of his students something like that every semester. He was that sort of supportive rascal, after all. You know, like the husband eyeing his ballooning Kirstie Alley sized wife who says, "What? No, dear, you aren't putting on weight! You looking better today than the day we got married." But at the time, I wasn't as cynical as I am now. Instead, his compliment stunned me. I knew good writers – my classmates Tom Patterson, Stevie Daniels, and Melissa Tufts were three – and I wasn't anywhere near their caliber. But Ron, a man I respected and who was himself an acclaimed writer, put me on their par, at least momentarily. Whoa.

I never sent the story to a magazine for publication. I didn't care whether it was published. What mattered was that Ron said the story was good. I could write. That was the moment that a small fire was lit inside me. Maybe I should think about writing as a career. I wasn't talented; I knew that. But I had a craft I could hone, a voice I could develop. Someone who believed in me. Along the way I quickly veered away from fiction to journalism. The skills are different but the fundamentals are the same.

Every once in a while, usually when I'm down, I still hear Ron in my head, saying "Hell, you can do this, John." That is, when I don't hear him say, "Here, have another cup of sake." But that's another story.

*John Robinson*

John Robinson is editor of the *News & Record* in Greensboro, N.C., and credits his St. Andrews education for much of his success. (The sake gets credit for the rest.)

MY WIFE, JACKIE, and our two children arrived with me in La Grande Oregon and to the campus of Eastern Oregon College. This in 1962.

We met the undervalued Ron Bayes. I joined him in being the cultural happening in that town. I left in 1966 to join the faculty of the University of Southern California.

The following year I was the Studio Art Chairman at UNC-Chapel Hill. Dub White was on leave from St. Andrews and we were neighbors. Conversations led to the information that St. Andrews was looking for a "catalyst." Ron was invited to come for an interview. Jonathan Williams was at that time visiting in La Grande. He told Ron "They have one black tie poetry reading each year at the Presidents house." Bayes called us from the Portland airport to say that he had changed his mind and was not coming.

Jackie took the phone from my hand and said "Ron, you get your ass on that plane!" He did. The rest is history.

*Marvin Saltzman*

(Jackie died three years ago)

Marvin Saltzman graduated with an M.F.A. from the University of Southern California in 1959. In 1962 he joined the faculty of Eastern Oregon College, then the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Southern California, and, from 1967-1997, was on the faculty of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. A painter and draughtsman represented in major private and public collections, he has exhibited extensively and, at the age of 80, is still drawing and painting. He is a recipient of the Sam Ragan Award and the North Carolina Award in Fine Art.

## RON BAYES, YUKIO MISHIMA, & ME

"MR. SA'A'TO'O," the caller to my office said. He introduced himself as Ron Bayes, calling from North Carolina, and asked if I would translate Yukio Mishima's play *My Friend Hitler*. He had been in touch with Harvard, and Prof. Howard Hibbett had recommended me. It was in 1979 or 1980. Long distance telephone calls still had static and his voice rose and fell.

Flattered, I said, Yes, sir! on the spot, even though I didn't know there was a play about Adolf Hitler, let alone the fact that it was by someone who a decade earlier had made my heart jump with a giant front-page article in The New York Times: Yukio Mishima died by disembowelment and decapitation after trying to incite soldiers to revolt!

In truth, although I wasn't paying much attention as a student of English at Doshisha University, in Kyoto, Mishima had become the most glamorous Japanese writer ever by the mid-1960s. He put himself forward with what Gore Vidal would call the "publicness" of his actions, in several, unwriterly fields. Most attention-grabbing among them, he formed a paramilitary group, the Shield Society, though that was after I arrived in New York, in early 1968. (Only recently I learned that the uniform he selected for his men was patterned after the U.S. Air Force Academy's.)

Yet I had read just one novel of his, *Kinkakuji* or, as Ivan Morris rendered it, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*. I was not even aware that the man had written more than seventy plays and most were staged as soon as he wrote them.

Ron's request, and my translation, at any rate, began a friendship that would last to this day. Ron has since invited me every year to speak at his Writers Forum at St. Andrews Presbyterian College (and a few classes). *My Friend Hitler* has also led to my greater involvement with Yukio Mishima of the kind that I wouldn't have imagined during my excitement over his spectacular manner of death.

As a result of my translation *My Friend Hitler*, which Ron duly printed in *St. Andrews Review*, followed by another play of Mishima's, *The Terrace of the Leper King*, the Pacific Basin



Institute, which Frank Gibney founded, commissioned me to translate a novel, a play, and an essay by Mishima. In the end, the publisher the institute chose published only the novel, *Silk and Insight* (1998), and that left me with two plays published and one unpublished.

So I asked Columbia University Press if they'd be interested in an anthology of Mishima plays if I added a few more. They said yes. The result is *My Friend Hitler and Other Plays of Yukio Mishima* (2002). (When my editor and I discussed the title, I jokingly suggested including "my friend Hitler" in it—jokingly because I thought "Hitler" would be a "no-no" in New York City. To my surprise, the editor thought that was a great idea.)

While translating *Silk and Insight*, which is based on an actual human-rights strike at a textile company in 1954, I picked up some of the "period considerations" and such needed for translating the novel in the column I was writing for *OCS News*, a Japanese-language biweekly published in New York. Some time afterward I had a call from Tokyo, again at my office, from a fellow who began by saying, "Probably you don't know me, but my name is Naoki Inose." He had read my *OCS News* column and wanted me to consider translating his biography of Mishima into English.

Indeed, I did not recognize his name, but found soon enough that he was a well-known writer. To start, many of my Japanese colleagues sent from Tokyo to work here, in New York City, knew about him.

The upshot of the phone call was my agreement a few years later to translate his biography, titled *Persona*, on one important condition: I can subtract from and add to it in the course of translation. It has since proved to be the second-longest undertaking I've had—second only to *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology* (2008), which took at least a dozen years to complete and publish. I am hoping to be able to put the biography in the hands of Ron Bayes, the poet who started the whole thing for me 30 years ago, before long.

*My Friend Hitler* has four characters, all male: the industrialist Gustav Krupp, the socialist theoretician Gregor Strasser, the leader of the Storm Battalion Ernest Roehm, and

Adolf Hitler. For years Ron talked about staging the play in New York in an all-girl-revue format. His idea has been realized in a way: In the summer of 2007, a young actress, Zehra Fazal, staged it as a one-woman show at the Fringe Festival in Washington, D.C. How did she do it? The brand-new Wellesley graduate played Hitler, either talking or responding to Roehm or Krupp, dropping Strasser altogether.

I wish Ron could have seen Zehra's passion and ingenuity. With all expenses to be paid for by herself, she wore a trench coat she found in a secondhand clothing store. And yes, she had the Hitler trademark glued under her shapely nose: *the* moustache. I am sure Ron—for that matter, Mishima—would have enjoyed her performance immensely.

In his books of poetry Ron makes several references to Mishima, whom he met in the mid-1960s.

Outside the St. Andrews College campus, Ron introduced me and my wife to Pawleys Island as a vacation place and, after Hurricane Hugo temporarily incapacitated the "Washington-Slept-Here" barrier island, to Sunset Beach, where the St. Andrews professor Grace Gibson has a summerhouse. All the many evenings we spent together on the Carolinian shore remain as memorable as the many days I spent on the lacustrine campus, talking to Ron's students and colleagues.

### *Hiroaki Sato*

Hiroaki Sato is a prolific translator and essayist living in New York. St. Andrews Press published his book of poems, *That First Time*, in 1988. Among his dozens of translations are works by Matsuo Basho, Yukio Mishima, Hosai Ozaki, and Gozo Yoshimasu, as well as the recent *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology*.



Cover image for Ron Bayes's *A Beast in View*  
St. Andrews Press, 1985 (Lois Siegel).

Lois Siegel, whose portraits of Ron Bayes are featured on the front and back covers of this book, is a filmmaker, casting director, writer, photographer, professor, and musician based in Ottawa, Canada. Siegel was named one of the Capital City's Top 50: People who are shaping the future of the National Capital, by *Ottawa Life Magazine*, in 2002. She has been a guest speaker at St. Andrews College, where she showed her films and spoke at the Writer's Forum. In 2009 she was presented with the annual Ethel N. Fortner Writer and Community Award by the college.

## RON CONFIGURES HIS THEORIES OF THE DARKNESS

Mentor to the heart  
within the dignity of intellect  
stammering its art  
like Rimbaud  
or Socrates

or like a Jew in Nazi snow  
or the acolyte  
dwelling in the poor poor night  
and praying  
to Jesus  
on his knees...

*Sam Silva*

Sam Silva lives in Fayetteville N.C. and is the author of numerous poems published in magazines and books in print and (especially) online.

# THE MODERN AMERICAN SIGN AS A MEDIUM FOR POETRY

*For that timeless traveler, Ron Bayes*

*My subject is poetry not language, yet the roots of poetry are in language.  
--Ernest Fenollosa*

## I

Culinary Come-on, Myrtle Beach, SC:  
ALL YOU CAN EAT:  
LIMIT SIX ADULTS

## II

Diocese Declaration, Galveston-Houston, TX:  
STAYING IN BED AND SHOUTING "OH, GOD!"  
DOES NOT CONSTITUTE GOING TO CHURCH

## III

Wood Carver's Concession, Kit Carson Crafts Fair, Taos, NM:  
50% OFF  
FLAWED AND DISCONTINUED SAINTS

*Craig Smith*

A student in Ron Bayes's early creative "writhing" classes, Craig Smith (SA'71) also holds an M.A. in American Studies from New York University. He is the author of *Sing My Whole Life Long: Jenny Vincent's Life in Folk Music and Activism* and the forthcoming *Unsquare Dance: Riffs and Reflections on Dave Brubeck*.

## RONALD H. BAYES: AN APPRECIATION

IN THE FALL of 1974 I met Ron Bayes. I had moved from Wisconsin to my native state of North Carolina. I had been sending out poems for two years. I drove down to St. Andrews Presbyterian College where Ron was teaching and making things happen in all the arts, particularly, poetry, setting up weekly readings of students and visiting writers. From then until now (for me and thousands of "students") Ron has kept the pace, bringing to St. Andrews hundreds of poets and writers, including Robert Bly, Ann Deagon, James Laughlin, Joel Oppenheimer, Julie Suk, Lucinda Grey, Tom Wolfe, Sally Buckner, Glenna Luschei, Fred Chappell, Jaki Shelton Green, Lenard Moore, Jonathan Williams, Margaret Baddour, Betty Adcock, Caroline Kizer, David Rigsbee, and Robert Creeley.

I salute Ron Bayes's creating such an atmosphere for writers. More than that, however, I wish to say something about his poetry, the inevitable openness of it, rooted in Umapine, Oregon, his birth place, holding that childhood within his temperament for possibilities in an aesthetic special to himself, yet available to anyone who wishes to receive his truths.

*"from home, Umapine, a letter," a lyric from Porpoise:*

Dear-  
Hollyhocks are blooming in town now.  
They are very pretty. . .  
by the back porch some are higher than I am,  
and are a very dark red.  
There is a pink one  
near the corner.  
By way of excitement this morning I  
washed the car-enjoyed it though—I also  
cleaned out the back porch.

Bayes's memory, playing imaginative associations, marks perception's gain, ever forward, accumulating variety and surprise:

Today has been nice; almost cool.  
Now it is overcast:  
(put the car in the garage) and . .

The details seem like throwaways Bayes bolsters with ordinary-seeming radiance which highlights the local, leaving it only for concrete, general display to show off the experiences of this world. The effect makes harmonies of happiness, a settlement of transitory and often painful revelations.

What farm boy has not carried eggs in his pockets to exchange for goods at a country store or to see if he could do it? The stores have been replaced by convenient marts, but the image conjures the same familiar, trifling beauty hope balances and plays:

From "Chapter," in *The Casket maker*:

At evening on your farm  
did you ever put eggs in your pockets,  
see if you could do what others had  
screwed up at?

\*\*\*

One time I got brave enough to, scared at that,  
because my Aunt Exa was there;  
and I found this nest by the ditch  
and put two in each pocket and  
ran like hell. They busted.

The tone, the voice, conversational, vernacular, pulses right on the place poetry holds the line and makes me, reader and writer, appreciate running on, trying to make something out of words. "Who's sorry he tried running?"

Ron Bayes's life and work—as poet, editor, publisher, dramatist, fiction writer—seem ordinary and unreal (that he could do more than he does). I imagine his life as one honed close to the bone, the ongoing and coming presence of other tones and tunes.

One of my favorite passages endorses my own desire to say something I've never said before, to want to make

something really original and raw, the words humorous and serious too, like these from “Homage to Rod McKuen, E.A. Guest & Mrs. Browning”:

When I consider how my life  
has been  
before my brain has teamed up  
with my pen  
I rue the ruck and welter,  
toil and strife,  
and take Professor Gluck’s  
Beginning Creative Writing Course  
once again.

*Shelby Stephenson*

Shelby Stephenson's *Family Matters: Homage to July, the Slave Girl* won the Bell Day Prize for poetry in 2008. A former professor of literature and creative writing at Pembroke State University in N.C., he is the author of several books and chapbooks of poems, among them *Middle Creek Poems*, *Finch's Mash*, and *Carolina Shout!*



## A TRIBUTE TO RON

I FIRST MET RON BAYES at the annual and notoriously clannish North Carolina Writers Conference, where everyone drinks a lot of liquor and pretends to be like someone they desperately admire.

After a Friday night party, those who can get up are expected to attend the lectures on "How I Learned To Write" as well as several poetry readings delivered in different hometown dialects. By lunchtime clusters and cliques of people have gathered around the motel swimming pool to imbibe in "The hair of the dog that bit you." Veteran attenders find a lounge chair and take off some of their clothing to better bask in the sun. They watch and make remarks about young, wannabe writers who are on parade and looking for something. It comes on trays stacked with pimento cheese sandwiches and country ham biscuits. Beer is plentiful, and after lunch the party settles down to preening, convivial touching, smoking, and coughing.

I took a Lucky Strike out of Thad Stem's famous-for-lying mouth and lit my cigarette with his fire. It felt like we were in a movie and destined to be discovered and published soon.

I saw Ron Bayes for the first time and did not like his looks. He did not look like a Southern boy. He looked like a gangster boy from Chicago. He kept his hands in his pockets and had slicked his black hair to look like Elvis without the pompadour. He laughed too loud, a laugh that we all know by now. It seems to attract people. I went to check him out. He might be a real writer, like I wanted to be. Most of the writers I saw at this conference gave me a hostile glance and headed for somebody else. Who was Ron laughing at anyway? Me?

I walked over to him and stomped my foot.

"Let's go for a ride," I said to him.

"I don't have a car," Ron answered. "But we could steal one. Let's go to the parking lot and steal Sam Ragan's car."

"Who's Sam Reagan?"

"The biggest dog in this pony show. The editor of the Raleigh newspaper. He is a friend of mine and a really nice guy, so we can steal his car."

"Listen Ron, I've got a better idea: Let's steal Thad Stem's car; he's so drunk that his wife won't let him drive this weekend, so he won't even know that it's gone."

"No," Ron said, "I've got an even better idea. Look over yonder at those mountains. There's a ski lift and it's moving. Let's go hop aboard."

From that moment I thought "I could fall for this guy! I mean, he was an idea man, an action man, a part child man with risk-taking in his eyes.

"Come on!"

He got out of his chair, bowed politely to me, and took my hand just like a Southern gentleman. I decided that we were in love, and so we took off to find the Land of Oz, both of us a little drunk but able to climb into the contraption and buckle up in the swing that carried us up and away from the things we both fear: boredom, pretentiousness, and writers block!

It was summer. There was no snow on the mountains and no one on the slopes as we were lifted above the pine forest and into the whispering silence. It felt like church, and it scared me to think that from here all my sins were more visible to God. To protect us, I reached into my knapsack, pulled out my tube of Alka Seltzer tablets, and popped one into my mouth.

"Whatcha got there?" Ron said.

"Bubbles!" It had started to fizz. "Want some?"

Ron laughed his laugh and held out his hands.

Having that tablet in my mouth seemed like putting gas in my car, except it was filling too fast. I couldn't stop it, and I couldn't swallow. The bubbles were choking me!

I saw fizzy stuff spilling out of Ron's mouth and into his lap, and I panicked. We both tried to spit but there was not enough saliva to expel these wafers of death. Then suddenly the swing bounced and set the hanging chains to clanking. Pulleys jerked and squeaked and tangled, but before we fell

onto the sharp rocky cliffs so far below a metal hook caught hold of the swing and turned us back down the mountain.

Ron wiped his brow and began to vomit. I could not breathe. Ron snatched the sun hat off my head and threw it like a Frisbee into the trees. Then he grabbed hold of my hair, pulled me against the safety rail, and slapped me hard on my back. Out came the swollen plug.

There was no one waiting for us or watching as we staggered away from the ski lift. Back at last in the Plantation Motel, I fell asleep listening to children splashing in the swimming pool.

I did not mention this adventure until I told it as a joke to my doctor. "My goodness," he said. "That was a close call for both of you. I knew someone who died from sucking an Alka Seltzer tablet without any water. You could have died!"

Yeah.

Ever since that experience I see Ron Bayes in a different light. He seems to me like a Super Southern Lifesaver Hero.

Ron and I have been friends for years, and we have had many adventures. In fact, even now we may be up to something. Ron is a joyful guy, and to quote the oft-repeated line from one of his student's poems about Marion Cannon, he is still fabulous "although wilted in appearance!"

He began and nurtured a profoundly creative teaching career at St. Andrews. He is a man of integrity who is loyal to his principles. When I was chastised and dismissed from Queens College in Charlotte for integrating my writing classes, Ron was a loyal encourager, outraged on my behalf and standing always for civil rights.

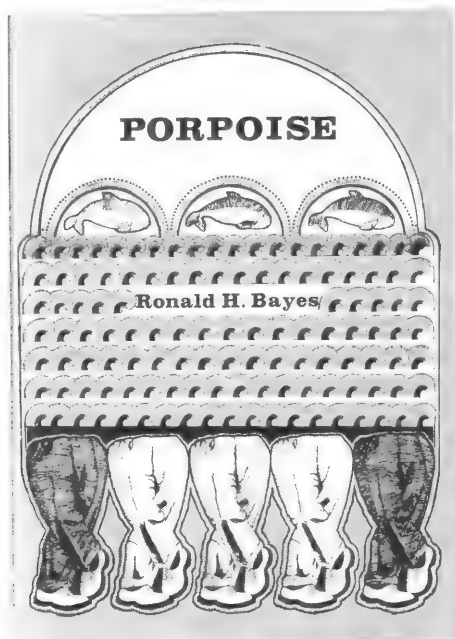
When I began to publish a literary magazine, *Red Clay Reader*, with Marion Cannon as its patron, the project became a big success with readers and writers, who gave it rave reviews. It evolved into a publishing house that was honored to present to the State of North Carolina and the world Ron Bayes' book *Porpoise*. Ron has given us many gifts: He conceptualized a lovely memorial to Marion Cannon, a poet who, like himself, had talent and vision and courage. The beautiful wooden

benches placed around the campus lake in Laurinburg honor these two poets.

Ron is a wonderful asset to St Andrews. Early in his tenure he pointed out and celebrated to students the responsibility of our becoming global citizens. He encourages his colleagues and nurtures his friends. It is a pleasure and a responsibility for us to honor him.

### *Charleen Swansea*

Charleen Swansea (SA Hon'92) is a writer, filmmaker, and publisher. She founded *The Red Clay Reader* and directed *The Southern Review* and the Atlantic Center for the Arts. She taught at NC State, Stanford, Columbia, and the College of Charleston. She is a consultant to business and education about the interface between creativity and science. A featured performer in many award-winning films, including Ross McElwee's *Charleen*, she is writing a book, *Smart*, about science and art.



Amanda Wallace: Cover of *Porpoise*,  
Red Clay Books, 1974

## FROM THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF THE VENERABLE BAYES:

### *The parable of the escaped prisoners*

1 And he began again to teach: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered [        ]<sup>1</sup>, and stood at the [    ]; and the whole multitude was by the [    ]. 2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a father into the village: and hearing of the escape *of certain* notorious prisoners from the stronghold of the governor, returned to his family, saying, 4 Fetch me the saturn<sup>2</sup> that I might take it to the village feeding station [θέση της διατροφής]<sup>3</sup> and feed *it up*.

5 So the son didst so fetch the saturn and brought it to his father saying, Here is the family saturn, father, so that you might feed *it up* at the village. 6 And the father took the saturn to the village; and upon his return he left it *fitted with* keys [με τα κλειδιά στην ανάφλεξη]<sup>4</sup> in an haughty place.

7 And it came to pass that the escaped prisoners *happened upon* the abode of the family. 8 Some passed by in haste, not seeing the saturn. 9 And some seeing the keys through the window, thought the saturn locked and continued on. 10 And some upon seeing the keys, tried the door but when it appeared to hold fast, soon relinquished and hurried on. 11 And some opened the door, swiftly entered, ignited [σύνολο στην πυρκαγιά]<sup>5</sup> the saturn and were never seen near that place again.<sup>6</sup>

And he said unto them, He that hath ears [αυτιά]<sup>7</sup> to hear, let him hear. 12 And while they supped [καθορισμένος κυνόδοντας στα τρόφιμα]<sup>8</sup> they that were about him [συκοφάντεις και εκείνοι που επάνω απορροφήστε]<sup>9</sup> asked of him the parable.

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of *these* things, of the Muse,<sup>10</sup> but unto them that are without [αυλητές]<sup>11</sup> all must be done in parable. 13 Know ye not this parable? How then will ye know all parables?

14 The father set the Muse before the divers prisoners.

15 And these are they which cometh upon the Muse: and immediately cometh Satan [διάβολος, ἡ φιλόδοξοι σπουδαστές προ-νόμου]<sup>12</sup> and taketh their sight clean away.

16 And these are they likewise: when they see the Muse *fitted with* keys, immediately receive the sight with gladness; 17 And having no real feeling for it, endure for a time; afterward, when rejected by the world [αδίστακτοι εκδότες και φαύλοι αποκαλούμενοι συντάκτες]<sup>13</sup>, immediately feel themselves unworthy.

18 And these are they, which upon seeing the Muse *with* keys *fitted* and upon being frustrated by the door held fast, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches [δικαιώματα τηλεόρασης και κινηματογράφων πραγματικότητας]<sup>14</sup>, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Muse, and it becometh dried up [ξεράνετε ως πνεύμα ενός ποιητή]<sup>15</sup>.

20 And these are they which enter into the Muse; such as hear the Muse, and receive it, and travel many furlongs, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred in its shelter.

21 And he said unto them, He that hath ears [αυτιά]<sup>16</sup> to hear, let him hear. 22 And when he was alone, they that were about him [συκοφάντεις και εκείνοι που επάνω αποροφήστε]<sup>17</sup> asked of him the parable. 23 And he said unto them, Unto you alone it is [ ] know the mystery of the [ ] God: and that mystery is [ ].<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Accepted lacunae at the beginning and end of the manuscript are noted by empty brackets. The gaps from the original program code written by Pseudo Q, to whose decryption we owe the existence of the Hagiography, are the residue of early attempts at decryption that destroyed forever key answers (both cryptographic and actual) . As PQ's narrative, contained in [Q, Pseudo. "Ce que le fabricant de cercueil a trouvé." Journal aller zutreffenden Klugheit decodiert (2197) ] related, the original encryption program used the ancient Gospel of Mark as the key and was applied to various ancient codices. Seemingly large portions of the original Markan text were left intact. It wasn't until J. Land Roderix' discovery of the correct codex and the correction of the algorithm (once Q's infamous intent was made clear) that the standard, accepted *Hagiography* emerged.

<sup>2</sup>Probably some form of bodily transport, now obsolete. There is apparently no reason to connect it to the ancient name for the Terran satellite of the same name. Some authorities consider this to be a conflation with an account contained in the *Hagiography of the Blessed May Woodbell*, who speaks of being trapped in a "silver Saturn-- best cart I ever had; if I could only figure out how to unlock the doors from the inside" and other apocryphal tales. Others claim, referring to verse 12 that the term is technical and/or esoteric . For an interesting treatment of this and other questions, *q.v.*, Possumsen, Ole. "Muse as *logos* in mystery cults of late 20th-century Southeastern Central North Carolina." Sane Tanned Ruse Refuse (2217).

<sup>3</sup> *lit., place of nutrition, euph.*

<sup>4</sup> *lit., with the keys in the ignition.*

<sup>5</sup> *lit., set on fire*, a hotly contested term, used as the foundation of the Bayes Ascendant School, claiming that the Venerable Bayes, was a reincarnation of Elijah (or in northern regions, Enoch). Such fanciful and conflated thinking later fueled other schools including, most infamously, the neo-Carpocratic, Bayesian Acolytes of Dominica (BAD), generally accepted as being the resultant outgrowth of a rare parasite in the drinking water of that particular island, which could easily pass through the blood-brain barrier. Other self-proclaimed hierophants included The Esoteric Eunuchs of the Kundalini (eeK) and the highly secretive, early 21st-century Neocon Excons (NEC<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> Some authorities add, "μολονότι πολλές ακούσει ότι είχαν γίνει μαθητές του αζιότιμου Bayes και ακόμη και δημοσίευσε ένα πράγμα ή δύο. " i.e., *though many heard that they had become disciples of the Venerable Bayes and even published a thing or two.*"

<sup>7</sup> *vestigial organs, the equivalent of our modern auditory implants.*

<sup>8</sup> *lit., set fang to food.*

<sup>9</sup> *lit., sycophants and those which sucketh up*

10 Of course, there is much dispute over the meaning of this term. In fact, much of Bayesian thought hinges on this. Most authorities agree that it simply refers to the creative process, with overtones of post-Christian Christian thought. The neo-Bayesians claim, referring again to the infernal verse 12, that the term is esoteric, and concerns initiation mysteries of a decidedly dicey character. It is also accepted that the Great Uprising of 2088 by the ProtoRon-Luddites (PRL) cited a manuscript essentially identical to this version, though in Japanese. The great war-cry "私達はあなたのハード・ドライブを、はい、はい、満州余りに揚げ !!!" !!! [We will fry your hard drive and yes, yes, Manchuria, too!!!] which has long been attributed to the *Hagiography*, is without any factual basis. It is a tragedy of the first order that the Venerable Bayes has been smeared with such-like distortion of his thought and this, in turn, has led to much misunderstanding of his most basic teachings.

[Not to mention the scurrilous (some say deliberate) misappropriation of his (false) image by the Tanned Ruse School depicting him as the mid-20th century cartoon character Mr Magoo. Such infamies do nothing to advance scholarship (or civil discourse for that matter) on any level, though all of us are burdened with such atrocities from time to time.]

<sup>11</sup> *lit., bagpipers*

<sup>12</sup> *lit., devil, or ambitious pre-law students*

<sup>13</sup> *lit., unscrupulous publishers and nefarious so-called editors.*

<sup>14</sup> *lit., reality television and movie rights.*

<sup>15</sup> *lit., as dry as a poet's wit.*

<sup>16</sup> *q.v., note 7.*

<sup>17</sup> *q.v., note 9.*

<sup>18</sup> And in the interpretation of this riddled verse lies the origin, not only of the Accepted School of Bayesianism, but all the other schools which spent the last half of the 21st-century destroying through infighting what was left of the academia of that time. It has only been since J. Land Roderix, in 2198 rediscovered the authoritative version of the *Hagiography* in the Laurinbergian Hoard, that great treasure trove of Bayesian knowledge, that some coherence was restored. Of course, this author lays no credence in the evidence of feline worship found there and is firmly in the camp of those who contend it was the work of a later group of nomadic cat-herders. But alas, there is no space here to get into that!

*Mike Tapager*

Mike Tapager lives near Shipman (with a "P") Virginia.



## UNTITLED

A life constructed  
as a poem is.

Distilled to its  
finer, or might  
we say, final

appointments. That place  
where rests

remembrance.

*Clay Vaughan*

Clay Vaughan was a prolific poet who worked in the Art Library of Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia and served as managing editor of *The Powhatan Review*. He was the proud father of three daughters and was a long-time Bayes enthusiast. He died on Valentines Day, 2008.

## IL MIGLIOR FABBRO: For RHB

TO TRY TO CAPTURE RON BAYES, in brief, in a way that does the man justice, is an exercise in futility. There are too many sides, too many stories, too many facets, too much *Ron*. A brief anecdote from the early nineties: My girlfriend (wife, now) and I accompanied Ron to the Governor's Awards. As the evening wrapped up, Ron announced he was making a run to the bar, and took requests. The girlfriend asked for a light beer. I don't remember my request, but I'm sure it was something I thought was sophisticated at the time – a screwdriver, maybe. Ron nodded, and off he went. When he returned, he held two great highball glasses in his hands, filled with scotch. The first was his. The second glass he bestowed upon me with the words, "Split it, and water it to taste."

Ron was a "mentor" in the truest sense of the word, before the touchy-feely types took hold of it, and redefined it to mean someone that teaches you how to organize your calendar and make inspirational collages. For me, as a teacher, he was a less-confrontational Lombardi in the classroom. When Ron returned one of my poems with the single notation "Trite?" I got the point. I still have it. He was right. To this day, Ron's influence accompanies my muse like the bouncer at the door of the champagne room at a strip club. He's there, always watching, but doesn't interfere unless I break the rules.

Ron's support of good work, however offbeat the topic might be, is unwavering. I once wrote a poem entitled "A Love Song for Lesbians" and Ron loved it. The fact that I've lost it in the years and moves that followed is truly, perhaps oddly, one of my greatest regrets. When so much college poetry is about shouting, "Fire!" in a crowded theater, it was Ron who taught me to shout "Movie!" and do it clearly and convincingly. Ron taught me that good poetry is a two-fisted business.

The man's work not only speaks for itself, it speaks. Period. When so much poetry is an exercise in abstraction, Ron's work

is the voice of a young soldier describing how he'll fool his wife when he gets home, and how she'll move her "laigs". It's a picture of a four-year old with a teddy bear and a stick. The line from Passus XIV, "What you gotta wade through to get to God" is fit for an action hero. It's all this, and so much more.

One would assume that a person of Ron's literary pedigree would harbor a nose-raising arrogance, but nothing could be further from the truth. His genuine interest in and generosity toward all of his students, especially a knuckleheaded, know-nothing, 18 year-old kid from Delaware, won't be forgotten.

In a world that is increasingly so much style, and so little substance, Ron Bayes is an anomaly. He's a one-of-a-kind archetype they don't build any more, like John Wayne or Sinatra. As a political thinker, a poet, a teacher, a friend, Ron is truly *il miglior fabbro*. The art is long, and thank God for that.

*Matthew M. Ware*

Matt Ware is a 1995 graduate of St. Andrews College and the 1994 winner of the Bunn-McClelland Chapbook Award. A native of Wilmington, Delaware, Matt currently resides in Cary, North Carolina with his wife, Susanna.

# TELL ME, OLD FRIEND

*For Ron Bayes*

## I.

Do you remember that time  
in Chapel Hill, late November of '74,  
a weekend with boisterous poets?  
Very few early risers in that bunch,  
but there we were, hoofing it up Franklin  
Street early Sunday to find coffee and a newspaper.

Who knows what might happen in the world  
when poets aren't paying attention.

## II.

Out of the blue  
I call you on a Sunday  
new translations of Tu Fu.  
Fine stuff – we both agree,  
you on the Atlantic or nearly so  
me butt up against the Pacific.  
We have traded sides of the continent  
with each other.

Only time will  
tell if it was a Fool's trade.

## III.

In a swelter of late summer,  
poets arrive to read – First Chinese food  
then a walk along the edge of the lake  
filled with cypress, the edges crowded with  
azaleas. Great poems read by poets who would be  
dead sooner than – who could know

such sorrow – but on that night – wild  
talk, joking and a bottle of gin, as though

the stars were holding their breath,  
listening for punchlines.

#### IV.

A Cheer for Ron

U-U-u-U

Ma-Ma

Pine

Medford, Medford

Pórtland Rah

Lumbee, Lumbee

Wilmington, Lumberton

Laurinburg, hah.

*Jackson Wheeler*

Jackson Wheeler is a social worker in Southern CA. As part of his journey to the West, he spent four years at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he was an honors student in Carolyn Kizer's Honors Seminar, and met the affable genius Ron Bayes circa 1973. *St. Andrews Review* published early work. Years later as editor of *SOLO: A Journal of Poetry*, he solicited work from the Bard of Laurinburg. Now, since both parties are still alive, "it would be impertinent to say a life-long friendship ensued. Let's just say the friendship continues to thrive with cards, postcards, phone-calls, gossip, and the occasional reading of Tu Fu."

## RON BAYES AND THE JOURNEY

RON BAYES ALWAYS makes you realize that you are moving into a celebration of great magnitude. All life is his incredible view of things. He sees every occurrence as if it were the biggest of Bangs. And it was and is. His lens is extraordinary, clairvoyant, and transparent.

When he spoke, my jaws dropped, my soft palette lifted with an inner smile, or I vibrated with an authentic giggle. At any moment, you could see the whole universe with Ron.

In the early years of my tenure with St. Andrews College, Ron lent me his car to drive through the ice and snow to Chapel Hill to meet a visiting artist, Richard DeMarco, a gallery owner in Edinburgh, Scotland. He is also an artist who took artists on a journey as an art form. It was the energy of Ron. Richard DeMarco began his journey with an artist in prison and it went from land to sea—to the homes with the greatest collections of art in Europe to days in a storm at sea where we toyed with near-death experiences in a wooden square-rigger, an exact copy of the ship that Charles Darwin had used in his voyages. We would dangerously climb cliffs to Gregorian abbeys hugh up off the waters in the midst of sea or visit islands full of millions of daffodils where the lead gardener would take us to his most favorite spot on the island. Instead of the color I expected, there were a thousand tones of green, a much subtler beauty which rose with great pleasure there—like mist rising from a still lake at dawn.

We would not eat or sleep for days, and then we would be dining with art connoisseurs of the world. We went from holy Celtic sites to contemporary artists homes. We were a small group, seemingly unconnected on the outside, but inside we were mirroring each other. And Teresa O'Driscoll (originally from Galway) sang in Gaelic, and her husband, Bob (a Celtic scholar) recited Yeats and Keats spontaneously on board that ship of fools. I discovered that I could be at the helm of that ship as if this had been my profession in a former

life, and I sailed us through the most dangerous seas in the world, the Scilly Isles, effortlessly, fearlessly, and buoyantly.

Soon enough many of these sailors would be on campus—Teresa miming Joyce, Bob reciting by the fire in the Celtic garden where student artists had hauled stones to celebrate the energy of the arts. John David Mooney, light artist from Chicago, later co-created with the St. Andrews art department a choreographed light piece (made with canoes) floating on the lake that aligned with a star alignment that happens every 50,000 years. All of this because Ron loaned me his car!

Ron is one of—if not *the*—most powerful manifestations of co-creation that I have experienced. He starts the ball rolling for hundreds of people to go on their own voyage which brings them right back home to see themselves as vehicles of power and art. I know that it was no coincidence that I had this privilege. I am deeply grateful always for his intertwined conscious and unconscious mind radiating an energy that sets off some hilarious cosmic scheme straight out of Eastern Indian myth and archetype.

*Anna Williamson*

Anna Williamson was a member of the St Andrews art faculty for 12 years. She lives in Chapel Hill with her husband, historian and writer Joel Williamson, and teaches yoga there and in her Yoga Johns Studio, near Laurinburg. She teaches Purna Yoga, Freedom Style Yoga, and Yoga Nidra.

## UPON MEETING RON

"It was Williams, wasn't it?" you said  
as we strolled down the aisle of the Little Giant.  
"But have you read *Kora in Hell*?" I asked,  
and the clerk behind the counter  
looked down disapprovingly.  
"'Hell'? Not in this town, boy."

## ALICE

In the summer of 1980, John Craig and I travelled south from Richmond to visit Ron at his summer digs in Pawley's Island, South Carolina. We were somewhat familiar with the story of Alice Flagg, the doomed heroine of the Hermitage, a beautiful but decaying mansion that to this day still looms over the beach at Murrell's Inlet. One evening at dusk we drove over to All Saints Parish Church Cemetery to visit Alice's grave. But if you do not know her story, a brief summary is in order.

In 1849 or so, Alice was betrothed to a lumberman, a manufacturer of turpentine. Her family did not approve—although her beau had given her an engagement ring, which she hid on a ribbon around her neck. When her family discovered the ring, they forced Alice to move to Charleston, where she languished, falling ill until eventually the family relented and brought her back to the Hermitage. And there at the Inlet she died and was buried at All Saints—without her beloved ring.

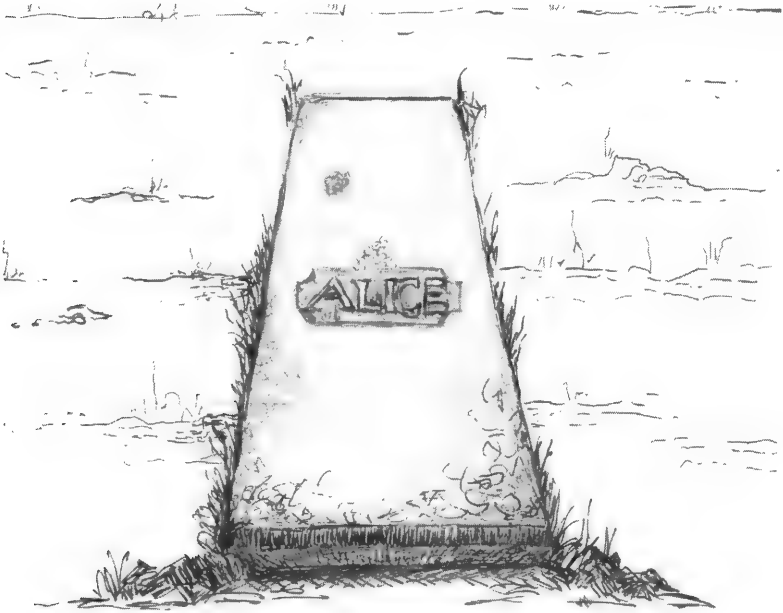
Legend has it that her ghost haunts the Hermitage and the graveyard at All Saints—where, if you walk a number of times around her grave, she will arise, looking in vain for her lost engagement ring. Since neither Ron nor John nor I had an engagement ring attached to our persons, Alice did not arise



and confront us in ghostly jealousy, but the weight of her desire is palpable in the gloom of All Saints.

*John Williamson*

John Williamson is a 1974 graduate of St. Andrews, where he served as editor of *Cairn*. He is the author of four books of poetry, two of which, *Coconut Tears* and *Night*, were published by St. Andrews.



Mark Williamson, *Alice*

Mark Williamson, Ph.D., is an art historian and fine artist. He teaches at Onondaga Community College, Broome Community College and Tompkins Cortland Community College, in central upstate New York.

## 2011.1.1. TOKYO:

(Deep . . . .) inviting rhythm, . . . (sweet, . . . beauteous) feel of wave-crests, at the bottom of Mr. Ron Bayes' heart, . . . (at its depth, . . . ) stirred, rose, in the early spring of 1980, when at Mr. Ron Bayes' invitation, almost as if riding the waves, from snowy Michigan, I visited St. Andrews, probably, already, probably, I (a pale fellow like a ghostly breath. . . ) was touching, America's innermost soul, . . . .

Scent of tides, and I ask my heart asleep, constantly, reflecting on the *visages* of Edgar Poe and Yukio Mishima and Mr. Bayes, . . . . "There's the sound of waves of eternal recurrence, isn't there. . . ," so says a mysterious voice. Mr. Ron Bayes. Since when, but along a path within myself, Yokosan (the late Mrs. Mishima) and, Mishima's voice when you met him in Angkor Thom in Cambodia, . . . (divine cherry trees perhaps, like cilia) have been walking together, . . . .

Scent of tides, Oh, America's innermost soul.

*Gozo Yoshimasu*

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嶋  
増  
岡  
造

105 hi  
masu  
GO  
20



Gozo Yoshimasu and Ron Bayes (*Lynda Smith photo, 1980s*).

Gozo Yoshimasu has been at the forefront of avant-garde poetry writing since he published his first book, appropriately titled *Shuppatsu (Starting Out)*, in 1964. St. Andrews Press published his book *Osiris, The God of Stone*, translated by Hiroaki Sato. Yoshimasu is the author of more than a dozen books, his work in English includes *A Thousand Steps and More: Selected Poems and Prose*.

Lynda Smith earned a B.A. in art at St. Andrews, where she studied with Jim Linehan and Anna Williamson, and an M.A. in art from New York University. She works in sculpture, painting, and photography. With her husband, Craig, she operates Palisade Press in New Mexico.

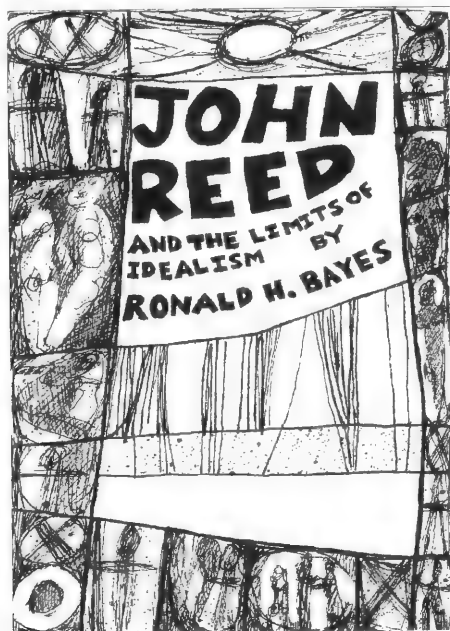
By RONALD H. BAYES

*Poetry*

Dust and Desire (1960)  
Cages and Journeys (1964)  
Child Outside My Window (1965)  
Constructions in English and Japanese (1967)  
Notice/Ejection (1967)  
X-ing Warm (1968)  
History of the Turtle (Umapine Tetralogy I, 1970)  
The Casketmaker: Selected Shorter Poems (1972)  
Porpoise (Umapine Tetralogy II, 1974)  
King of August (1975)  
Tokyo Annex (Umapine Tetralogy III, 1977)  
Fram (Umapine Tetralogy IV, 1979)  
A Beast in View (1985)  
Guises: New & Selected Poems (1992)  
God Bless Captain Vere (*forthcoming*)

*Prose*

John Reed and the Limits of Idealism



Marvin Saltzman: Cover of *John Reed*,  
South & West, 1967.

The Plays of Yukio Mishima  
Sister City

*For the Stage*

An Evening with Ezra Pound  
An Evening with William Carlos Williams

*Folios with Artists*

The Hydari Sequence: with Tommy Sperling  
Chapel Hill Gravel: with Marvin Saltzman  
Paint the Window Purple: with Marvin Saltzman  
Six by Two: with Marvin Saltzman  
Summer Evening Colorado: with Bill Burruss  
The Water Mirror: with Ralph Weiss  
Words from the Lithuanian: with Marvin Saltzman

*Recordings*

Ron Bayes: Hit Poetry

*Editor*

Humane Learning in a Changing Age: Essays in Honor of  
Robert F. Davidson

*Honors*

Woodrow Wilson National Fellow  
Danforth Associate  
Diploma of Merit, UDA, Italy  
Master Poet, Atlantic Center for the Arts, Florida  
North Carolina Award for Literature  
Bayes Chair in Creative Writing, St. Andrews College  
Bayes Lifetime Achievement Award, N. C. Writers Network  
Life Member, Oregon State Poetry Association  
Life Member, North Carolina Poetry Society

## A RON BAYES SAMPLER

The editors offer this sampler of Ron's poems with the hope that it will send readers back to his original work. His books are largely out of print, but can be found on various online search sites.

### UNPUBLISHED POEMS

#### MEXICAN SET

I.

Christmas. One day before it.  
South from Walla Walla to  
out of San Francisco.  
Sun in the plane window.  
I sweat good sweat,  
move into the 3<sup>rd</sup> martini.  
Stranger next to me smiles straight  
ahead. "Beats  
hell outa  
cola, don't it?"

II.

Dear One, you are so many thousands of miles away.  
I write you postcards. The hand shakes. I write big.  
People here seem happy at Christmas. Each year.  
Each year a new and funny affectation. It's eyelashes  
this year. 20 pesos a set. Or was it 4.  
Grannys & kiddies & me bat at each other in  
Chapultepec Park about midnight and laugh and laugh  
and laugh.  
It has been long since  
I laughed. To myself.  
Out of joy.

III.

Back in the City he sits  
in the courtyard, sun high  
& hot on the shoulders.

He is drinking too much.  
He is thinking of years. You. Years.  
How will the future  
ones  
go?

IV.

*Christmas afternoon bullfight: Queretaro*

His bloodshot eyes  
roll, roll  
he hears cheers. Blood streams. Streams  
of those who love him  
in a way  
as he goes down  
into the soft black finite.

TO JOANNE, DYING OF CANCER

You say, "Please write  
a poem to me or for me  
soon." Right now

I'm tearing along  
in the back seat of my own car  
on the way to a poetry reading.

We are tearing along in the back seat  
of my car to a poetry reading now.  
Someone is at the wheel I trust.

We must trust.  
I love you.  
We are tearing  
along  
safely / I trust /  
together.

AGAINST ANOTHER WAR  
*for Mohamed Karbala*

Hamed, we stood at dusk in Lebanon  
and heard the voices dying one by one,  
as by the sea heard the red sun go down.

With Nabil up to Tripoli's fort stone,  
then Kfar Yasne swimming near the sea.  
Sailed its royal to the fort at Tyre.

From caverns up the hill to tourist's Christ;  
rude, ruined, grand Balbec; the Beirut stars.  
Far more, at each, as with a single heart.

Now I sit here to rifle fire on black  
and white TV and wonder where you are.  
In Laurinburg I mourn a hundred dreams  
and hear the voices dying, one by one.

From HISTORY OF THE TURTLE

INTERVAL (*excerpt*)

Where wd you point if you were to point to yrself?  
That became the question:  
Where wd you point if you were to point to yrself?

Olson pointed to his head

Ginsberg pointed to his navel &  
mentioned the anus

Creeley to heart & head  
then hands upon  
hips rested & he  
smiled & told a story



Duncan to head & heart  
    alternating w/ swift  
    repetitive motions w/  
    nervous hands

Whalen pointed at the asker

## From CONSTRUCTIONS

### CONSTRUCTION III *(Higashi-Fuchu)*

In the very dark night  
in nearly total silence,  
exactly in time,  
and precisely together  
two old men ride their bikes by,  
silently friends  
going to work, still.

I can only hope  
to go into the dark  
this lovely way.  
Look beside the walk:  
small flowers may just  
be seen in the grass,  
even though it's eleven.

## From THE CASKETMAKER

### FOR A FRIEND WHO WALKED GIRDERS

I fumble at the weaving of a garland for you  
with whom a certain grace  
of understanding came late,  
at the right time, out of place.

Regardless of the calendar  
the fumble-fingered man I was  
and am; note how the things  
pop out of place in eye, in fact —  
but string and color, stalk and  
vine of mine I wind, now, briefly  
together for you, in grief,  
this way, for at least one last time  
and at least one first.

That I have never see a finer  
love than yours, or hurt more deep  
makes me confess the mystery.  
And now I think illogically about  
your summer with the bridges,  
rivets caught death-high, in air,  
knowing time lines extend some things.  
Some things stand out because  
they should,  
because they must.

Eyes sometime come alive in paintings  
where there are only almond whites,  
clocks stop when the dead love  
or want to touch us; when the dead love  
the living and when we reciprocate.  
And sometimes through such doors  
in spite of our desire, loved ones  
insist on entering. Then we can only  
touch and hope; make hope a garland,  
hope touch will suffice and we can  
—and be allowed to—take  
a world at at time.

## THE PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT

Rather tired at the Philadelphia airport.  
And the plane to board  
an hour and three coffees away.

What irony that at five-thirty a.m.  
I am at last moved by emotion  
(it has been a long time) when  
the unavoidable, continual soft-music loudspeaker  
romps a certain German polka,

And I remember another airport,  
other years,  
and I who have never wished to go back before  
wish to go back.

But one never can in time  
(and does space matter much?).

Want some irony?

In Germany it was—you weren't there—  
and I loved you: Christ! with what passion  
of intensity; jealous of whomever you were with

With the dawn pink and blue and grey and  
the trees mushroom clumping  
like wanting Breughel  
to red-in country rompers—or  
maybe someone good at satyrs —

And I remember that other airport,  
I remember a polka  
and that I loved you.

Now each in maze muddled and adjusting  
and we no longer love. Why kid? And I am not  
even jealous in wild imaginings.

A few people,  
a few more people:  
now we move . . . you move . . . I move . . . from progress  
to progress,  
unlove to unlove,  
anticipating only departures.

## SHRINE

### I.

Neither of us is a good tourist,  
still, very tired  
on the first day of the New Year  
we went to the  
Temple of the Emerald Buddha  
together, who had  
had love a day and a half.  
And the New Year, bright,  
seemed frightening and proper.  
We each bought Lord Buddha  
some small flowers;  
we did not even whisper  
when we removed our shoes,  
nor when we knelt in the crowd.

    The deep beauty of that place  
was beyond the saying,  
and your going right to the foot  
of the Lord Buddha  
to offer the flowers, though I,  
afraid, left mine on the floor,  
though wanting to be in your heart  
as sure and deep as  
Lord Buddha's stone is set in.

    And you left to meditate,  
I stayed to meditate.  
We met later in the crowd  
outside the gate, glaze-eyed and  
directionless in the traffic.

### II.

Now we are these miles  
away, readied for  
another parting,  
words in our way  
as ever they've been.

Tokyo is bright in the sun  
but the wind is coming up.  
You are two hours away—  
and tomorrow, which seems  
a century away, another last time.

There's nothing for it.  
I shall climb the hill  
to the Shinto Shrine  
behind my room and pray,  
and clap my hands, softly.

### From TOKYO ANNEX

#### PASSUS 32

*(July 14, 1965: A garland for Adlai Stevenson)*

Until about Oregon noon  
today  
for some  
partisan years  
notwithstanding  
when asked whenever "... name the  
greatest  
living American"  
I could always & only answer  
"Stevenson."  
That this afternoon  
I cannot answer  
tears  
my heart.

But let the lime by plumb!

Sevareid sd the night before  
he died he sd he wisht one day he  
might sit in the shade w/  
a glass of wine & watch people dance.

Who walking w/ Mrs. Tree  
fell near the American Embassy  
whose death day despite warm sunday  
was "... a dark, cold day."

(*"HERE I AM, SEND ME."*)

Who went always w/ heart;  
heart up, heart down, who  
foremost  
made last in march ego.

(The movement/ is music  
is more than/ music)  
... before he died  
he wisht  
one day  
he might sit in the shade  
a glass of wine in hand  
& watch the people dance.

#### POSTLUDE: AN OCTOBER POEM (*excerpt*)

Now more than ever I do not understand  
this dance  
unless it is the holy  
dance of the fool forever & w/ blinding  
speed.

#### THE FAULTS

Not that the faults are there  
Not how the faults got there  
Not how you learn to live with faults  
But how you live with them.

Not to change person  
But realize person  
Live with that person  
Wedded.

## From FRAM

### BOOK I: PASSUS XIV

"All of the shit at the foot of Fuji," I said.

"Yes," you said.

"Never again," we said.

What you gotta wade through to  
get to God.

### BOOK I: PASSUS XVI

As,  
when you don't know the difference  
between a prayer & a profanity,

When you can't **tell**  
the difference between a prayer  
& a profanity

You  
are close;  
you are very close.

## From A BEAST IN VIEW

### THAT DAY IN THE SHADOW OF APOLLO

Yukio, you in the garden were looking at the roses.

Suddenly,  
the boy was there again. You noticed him—in his school  
uniform.

Not as you or I would have it. Grungy, middleclass,  
kind of ugly.

Not rich-cut or sharp, not threadbare, boneclean  
and sharp.

Came back four days in a row. You knew now  
it would go on.

Holy Pinter! So: five strides eye-to-eye  
you put it:

"Ask any single question. I'll answer it if  
you'll go away."

And then, finally, you gave him—the odd kid—  
your smile, your incomparable smile.

"OK," he said (no smile).  
"When are you going to kill yourself?"

## ALONE

Cats  
& chickens.  
My fingers are  
bamboo.

Ah, Parishioners,  
one gropes months  
in the hours  
before dawn.

We are like  
the osage orange  
between Umapine  
& Wallula.



## KUNEO

### *1. New Mazda*

Orange  
odor softens  
Tuesday night chill,  
you waiting me in  
your first car, smile.

This is all new  
to both of us.  
Lights go on, then  
we go together  
into the night.

### *2. Item*

They butcher porpoises  
in the bay  
off Nago, North  
Okinawa.

The slaughter makes  
the waters of sea red  
as new cherries,  
Kuneo said.

Many come to watch  
each year.

## From GUISES

### GENERAL JOHN MEDITATES ON BEING LONELY

Absence makes  
the heart grow  
teeth.

LAURINBURG LITANY (*excerpt*)

16.

A Hindu named Gandhi.  
An agnostic named Hammar skjold.  
A Unitarian named Stevenson.  
A Confucian named Pound.  
A Shintoist who named himself Mishima.  
A Muslim named Anwar Sadat.

26.

And J. Patton ended his reading and  
turned to the audience said flatly  
"If you want to know about death and  
night and blood, ask Ron Bayes."

27.

Death  
and night  
and blood.  
I wish *I* could be clear.

WELL I LOST

everything you gave me--  
the pen in Dublin  
at the Post Office,

your letter back in  
London,  
your address in Philadelphia.

You poor bastard,  
you'll never hear  
from me again.

## From PORPOISE

### 2<sup>nd</sup> PORPOISE: SIXTH BOOK

"Come, dance with me," the Dancer pled,  
& Yeats did, sometimes stopping  
to write the beauty down  
while she danced there, alone.

I found five feathers on his grave,  
in the final balance it's all I have.

---

Reeds bending in wind, rain in gusts  
between the tavern and Sligo.  
The navel of Knocknarea protrudes,  
Ben Bulben darkens. A ways to go.

Dance, five rook feathers from Yeats' grave,  
I hold you close to tickle my heart.

---

Reeds in the wind, rain in the gusts,  
come dance with me that one has known  
time shall not all pull down the laurel'd hand  
that dared place beauty's crown.

I found five rook feathers on Yeats's grave.  
In the final balance that's all I have.

### 4<sup>th</sup> PORPOISE: EIGHTH BOOK

Refugees!  
The collapse  
of the prepared face  
when we recognize  
one another.

Hooray!



*Sincerity*

The precise definition of the word, pictorially  
the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot  
verbally. The right-hand half of this compound  
means to perfect, to bring into focus.

Confucius, *The Great Digest*  
Translated by Ezra Pound



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